



IN WAR TIMES

AT LA ROSE

BLANCHE

M·E·M·DAVIS·

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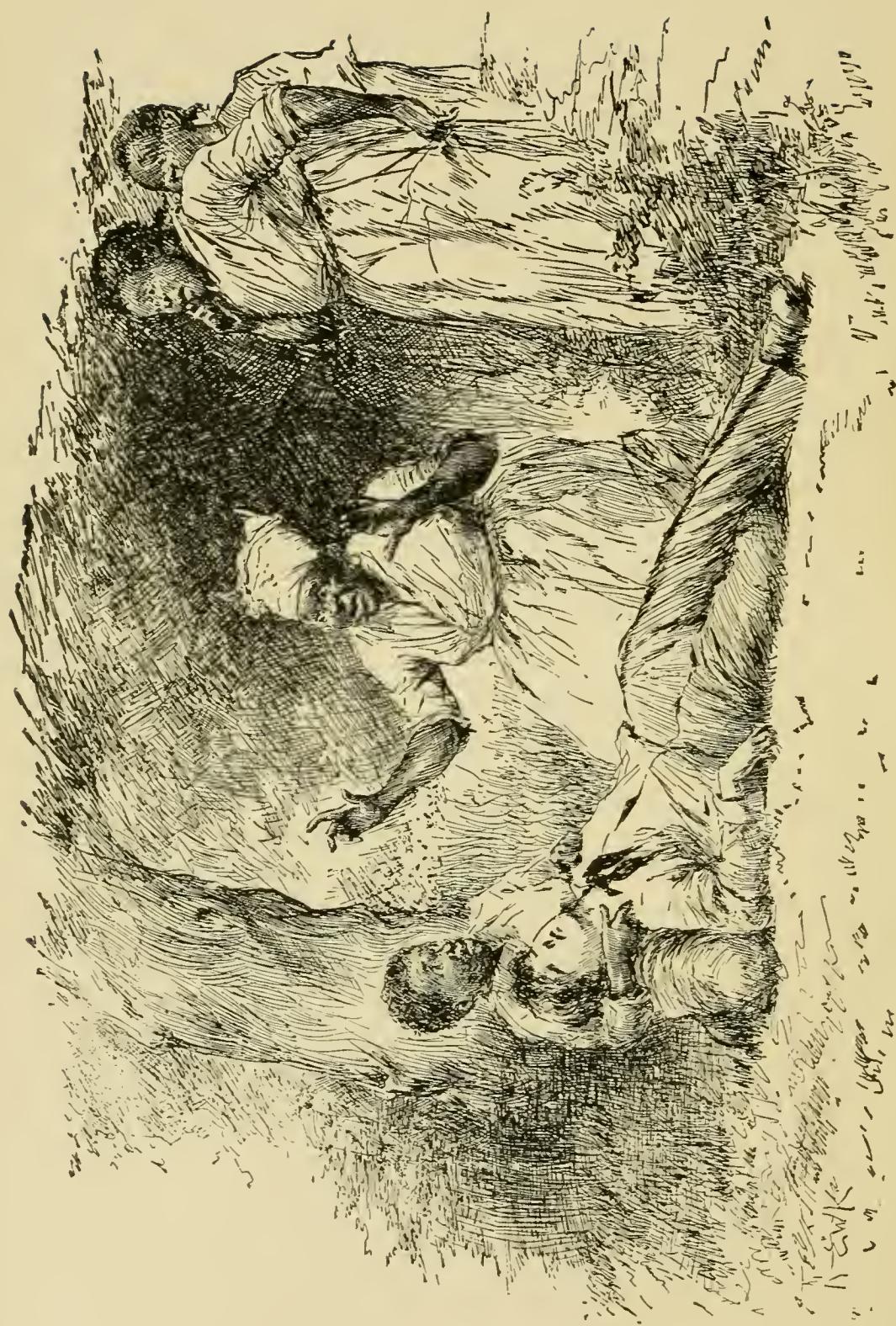


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“JES’ YOU KEEP STILL, MARSE TOM,” CRIED MAMMY.

IN WAR TIMES
AT LA ROSE BLANCHE

BY
M E M DAVIS

Twelve Illustrations by E W Kemble

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IN WAR-TIMES AT LA ROSE BLANCHE.

CHAPTER I.

MARCHING ORDERS.

WELL, Dandy?"

"Please, Marse, I wants to go to de war
'long o' Marse Tom."

We were all out on the high veranda at La Rose Blanche: my pretty fragile mother rocking softly in her low chair; and my father sitting on the steps at her feet. And great-uncle Selden, who had come up from the city to say good-by—for his battalion had marching orders from "the front," as everybody was then vaguely saying; and great-uncle Selden's black, woolly-headed little body-servant, Frederic. And my brothers, Tom

and Hartwell, in their bran-new uniforms all span-gled with brass-buttons. And cousin Nellie Brans-come, who was swinging in a hammock under the rose-vine and strumming upon her guitar—her brother Wesley was down in the summer-house pout-ing because he wasn't old enough to have a uniform and go to the war! And Captain Brion and Tom Dennison, who were under the rose-vine with cousin Nell. And Mandy, myself, and the four little boys.

It was a soft warm afternoon in March. The orange-trees were in bloom, and so were the roses and the honeysuckles and the violets, and a little breeze that came up from the river brought in all their blended sweets. The birds were singing in the magnolia-trees that shaded the broad avenue leading down to the front gate; and yellow and gold-dusted butterflies were zigzagging about the flower-dotted lawn. Overhead the sky was blue—oh! so blue, and away over by the sugar-house, where we could see the snow-white tents of the camp, with the flag fluttering from the tall flag-staff, there was a delicious purple haze that seemed to



melt into a low-lying mass of white cloud hovering about the edge of the swamp.

The carriage was drawn up at the foot of the long sweep of steps, with Uncle Joshua on the driver's seat; and two or three horses, saddled and bridled, were also waiting; for everybody, except "we chillun," was going over to the camp to visit the Selden Rifles.

Dandy had led around one of the horses and after standing a moment at its head, he had dropped the bridle and walked boldly up the steps and stood with his brimless hat in his hand before my father.

Then it was that my father said "Well, Dandy?" and Dandy said "Please, Marse, I wants to go to de war 'long o' Marse Tom."

My father shook his head. Dandy was only thirteen years old. It is true that my brother Hart was but two years older, and even my big brother Tom was little more than sixteen. But they had stormed so, and so entreated and threatened in their defiant boyish way to run away and enlist "anyhow, first thing anybody knew," that they had

finally wrung a reluctant consent from father to enroll themselves in the Selden Rifles, Captain Brion's company, now in camp over by the sugar-house and upon the eve of starting to the front. And oh! how proud they were when they came home one day and told us they had been mustered in (Mandy and I both thought it had something to do with plasters), and how they strutted around the house the day their new uniforms came home and they had them on for the first time!

Father shook his head. "No, Dandy," he said. "You are much too young to go. Besides Virgil—"

"But, Marse," abruptly broke in Dandy who had never been separated from brother Tom a day since he was four years old, "who gwine to take keer o' Marse *Tom*? Dars Virg fer ter bresh Marse Hart's close an' fetch he boots and load he gun, but *who* gwine—" Here Dandy choked and great tears rolled down his dusky cheeks.

Mandy giggled audibly when father again shook his head and Dandy went slowly down the steps. Mandy professed the greatest contempt for Dandy, who was her twin-brother.

At this moment Mammy, high-turbaned and smiling, came out carrying a big basket covered with a white cloth. The boys smacked their lips over the spicy and suggestive odors which floated from it. Then my mother and cousin Nell and great-uncle Selden and my father got into the carriage; the basket was handed up to uncle Joshua and they rolled away down the shelled drive, followed by Captain Brion and Tom Dennison on horseback; and by my brother Hart and Wesley Branscome, who emerged from the summer-house still pouting but eager, on foot. As the cavalcade started brother Tom waved his hand and called after his Captain with the easy familiarity of those first days of the war: "Say, Cap, I'm goin' to stay awhile. I'll be 'long about sundown." The Captain nodded and in a few moments they were all out in the wide lane between the Cherokee-rose hedges, moving briskly toward Camp Nellie.

"I think it's a shame that father won't let you go, Dandy," exclaimed brother Tom coming down the steps three at a time. We swarmed after him, Mandy and I, and Sam and Charley and Will, and

even little toddling Percy; and great-uncle Selden's Frederic. How fine and grand we thought him as we clustered about his knees, and yet how familiar with his bonny smile and quizzical eyes. The same idea seized us all as he swung us playfully around in the old way. "Play with us! O *please* play with us," cried Sam and Charley and I in a breath.

"Play with us," echoed Will.

"P'ay," cooed little Percy.

For brother Tom had always led all our sports and we missed him sadly since he had got himself mustered in. My dolls had never presented so respectable an appearance as since brother Tom had gone to live in camp, but somehow their respectability was not as satisfying as I had once imagined it might be.

The embryo soldier shook back his brown curls and laughed. "All right," he assented, tossing his cap on the steps and stripping off his many-buttoned jacket. "What'll we play?"

"Deer and dogs! Deer and dogs!" we shouted with one voice, eager for our favorite game.

"All right," he said again. "You an' Dandy'll

be the hunters, little Sis an' Mandy an' the little boys'll be the dogs. Mind out, now, I'm goin' to run mighty fast, an' I'm not goin' to fall until I'm shot 'tween the eyes. Ready! One! Two! Three! Go!" And he set off trotting leisurely through the winding walks toward the rose-garden in the corner of the grounds, making believe to run, with the little boys screaming at his heels. This was our old game. Mandy and Dandy and I held back so as to give the little ones a chance, until we neared the yupon-hedge surrounding the rose-garden. Then Dandy quickened his pace at which the laughing gray-clad "deer" leaped lightly over the hedge and began to speed around the mazy walks, Dandy in hot pursuit and nimble-footed Mandy not far behind. I — a fat, rather clumsy little lass of eight years toiled breathlessly along in the rear, lifting my stick gun and shouting "*bang*" at every step.

The tall, slim figure bounded here and there, flew across rose-beds ablaze with bloom, darted down unexpected aisles, doubled upon his steps, eluding Dandy who was only less quick than himself; and

finally breaking through the midst of the little boys who were scampering gleefully and wildly about the grass-plot in the corner, he sprang again over the hedge and dashed up the alley between the double rows of china-trees alongside the banana-plantation.

All at once, as I crept through a hole in the hedge to follow, I saw him drop to the ground. This was the proper climax to our little drama always. The hunter, then supposed to have wounded his prey, came up with an imaginary knife to despatch him, while the pack of hounds yelped and barked vigorously around. But this time, as we approached, the stag varied the usual programme. He rose and ran forward a few steps and dropped again ; and Dandy, who had reached the spot where he first fell, stopped suddenly with a cry. We saw him whirling around and beating the ground with his stick-gun. Something long and lithe and gleaming seemed to whirl with him in the cloud of dust that surrounded him. Presently the shining ceased ; he dropped his stick and ran to my brother Tom, stooped over him where

he lay and stood up again with another sharp cry. We had all stopped and we now huddled together in vague alarm.

“Mandy,” he shouted hoarsely, “run! *run!* blow de *haron* fur Marse. Run!” and down he dropped again on his knees.

It seemed but a second later — we had not stirred, the little boys and I — when I saw Mandy standing on the horse-block by the gate, blowing with all her might upon the big conch — the signal of danger at La Rose Blanche.

(Nobody could blow the conch like Mandy, not even Uncle Silas, who was an African Prince, and who had taught the art to all the younger negroes.)

But, even before the first blast, Mammy came flying out, with all the house-servants in her wake. She threw up her hands as she knelt for a moment by the boys, but said cheerfully as she rose to her feet: “Jes’ you keep still, Marse Tom, honey, an’, Dandy, don’t you stop er minnit. I’se comin’ back turreckly wid er split chicken. *You* Lizybun, Melindy, Sofy, you lazy niggers, hump yerselfs, an’ kill dem pullits in de hen-house hine de kitchen. Does

yer want ter see Marse Tom *die* er dat snake-pizen?"

Long before her speech was ended she had scuttled away and the last words were flung over her shoulder as she ran. They seemed to put life into my benumbed feet and I started forward. But stopped shrieking with horror. For there, writhing and twisting in the dust was an enormous snake, whose head was bruised, but whose slender and forked tongue was darting angrily from wide-open jaws.

"Lawd! Miss M'ay! min' out! min' out!" screamed Dandy, spitting out a great mouthful of green stuff, "mayby hit ain't dead yit!" He had my brother's head on his knee and as he spoke he bent down again and pressed his lips to his forehead which was pale and dripping with blood.

I sprang aside and then stumbled blindly on. "What's the matter with my brother Tom?" I demanded, trembling in every limb. Dandy lifted his head only to spit out another mouthful of greenish foam. "What's the matter with my brother

Tom?" I repeated imperiously, but beginning to cry.

"Rattlesnake done bit him. Spec he gwine ter die," mumbled Dandy with his mouth on the wound. At this, my brother Tom moved and groaned, and I howled outright. And the little boys howled louder even than they had been howling before.

I seem to remember nothing more until a horse came galloping up to the front gate; and my father was kneeling by my brother whose head was still on Dandy's knee, and was pouring something down his throat from a flask—and making Dandy swallow some too—and Mammy was binding a warm, bleeding, still-palpitating chicken upon his forehead; and the carriage was lumbering up the drive, with mother's pale face at the window, and a procession was going across the lawn with father looking very anxious and serious in front, carrying brother Tom, whose head hung lifelessly over his shoulder; and Mammy bringing up the rear with me in her arms, big girl as I was, and sobbing with all her might.

The next afternoon we were all out on the ve-

randa again, brother Tom lying on a lounge with his head bandaged and his ruddy face very pale, but almost as jolly and noisy as ever. Mother was hanging over him, hardly sure yet that he had been spared to her. Father stepped out of the wide hall as Dandy came around the corner of the house leading Captain Brion's horse. "Dandy," he called, "come up here."

Dandy dropped the bridle and came running up with his hat in his hand and his face agrin. Father did not speak to him at once, which I thought strange. He coughed once or twice, looking first at Dandy and then at brother Tom. Suddenly he reached out his big white hand and took Dandy's little black paw and gave it a hearty shake.

"Well, Dandy," he said as he dropped it, "what do you want most of everything in the world?"

And Dandy replied: "Please, Marse, I wants to go to de war 'long o' Marse Tom."

Father broke into a queer little laugh. "All right, Dandy, you can go," he said.

Brother Tom gave a wild whoop. Dandy made a respectful "curchy" and backed down the steps,

his dark eyes shining. He darted around the end of the gallery where Mandy and I looking over the railing saw him throw himself on his hands and lift his heels in the air cracking them jubilantly together.

“Look at dat fool nigger!” said Mandy scornfully. “Law, I *is* sorry for Marse Tom!”

A week later they went. We all drove over to the camp to say good-by, for there was to be no halt in the march down to the boat at the landing, waiting to take them away. Half the Parish was there with hampers of provisions and bottles of rare old wine and packages of books and bunches of flowers and such like for “the boys.”

Cousin Nelly presented a flag which Tom Denison received on the part of the Selden Rifles. He turned red in the face and stammered and broke down in his speech; but everybody applauded all the same; and I saw cousin Nellie give him her glove.

I gave to each of my brothers a clumsy *huswife*, which with Mandy’s help I had secretly constructed. (I saw one of them only the other day. It was

crumpled and stained and soiled, with the same needles—they were very big ones—that we stuck in it, sticking in it still !)

Mother packed the boys' trunks a last time herself putting in a great many fine white shirts and handkerchiefs and other linen, and showed Virgil and Dandy how to fold the things; and told them over and over to be careful of their young Masters.

And then . . . the good-byes were said . . . and we came away.

It was almost sunset when they came by. We were waiting at the front gate to see them pass. Mother and cousin Nellie were in the gateway with Mammy and the other house-servants around them. Mandy and I and the four little boys were perched on the fence with Wesley Branscome, who kept digging his fists in his eyes to keep back the tears, and whispering to me: "I'm as old as Dandy an' I'm goin' to run off an' go—see 'f I don't!"

There they came at last! along the rose-bordered lane. Uncle Silas marched in front beating a drum, and great-uncle Selden's old body-servant, who had been with him through the Mexican War, marched

by him, playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me," on the fife. Then came Captain Brion with father and great-uncle Selden who were going with them as far as the city. Little seven-year-old Frederic trotted as usual at uncle Selden's knee. Tom Dennison carried the flag and very proud he looked as his eyes fell upon cousin Nell, whose glove was fastened in his cap. They all lifted their caps and cheered as they went by; I fairly danced on the fence and the four little boys screamed themselves hoarse.

Our boys came almost the last, behind Dominique Brion and Louis Walker. Brother Tom lifted his cap and smiled at my mother, throwing up his head proudly, and looking very tall and handsome. But brother Hart looked straight before him, stumbling a little as if he did not see his way plainly. His cap was pulled down upon his yellow curls and his eyes were red and swollen. I know now that he had been crying; then I thought it a shame that he did not take off his cap and hurrah like the others.

Close behind the boys marched Virgil and

Dandy. Virgil was a sober staid fellow, very big and very black, and he strode along as if it were quite an everyday affair to go to war. But Dandy! Dandy was grinning from ear to ear. He danced along rather than walked! In front of the gate he threw himself on his hands and waved his feet exultantly about for a second, and then darted forward with a yell to regain his place.

“Look at dat fool nigger!” exclaimed Mandy from the fence. “My land! how sorry I *is* for Marse Tom!”

The music got fainter and fainter; the cloud of dust moved further down the lane, the flag floating in the midst of it. A turn in the road presently swallowed it up, and five minutes later the boat, whose smoking chimneys we could see above the trees at the landing, gave a shrill whistle and swung off down the river.

As I climbed down from the fence I saw Mammy with her arms around my mother, half-leading, half-carrying her to the house. “Don’t you cry, honey!” she implored, with the tears streaming down her own fat cheeks. “Dem chillun ain’t gwine

ter git killed! Ain't I hear you pray ter de Lawd, an' ain't de Lawd done say he gwine ans'er de prar o' de *good* 'ooman? An' ain't I done tu'n de grounds in de coffee cup dis very mawnin' an' see as how dey bofe gwine ter come home 'long o' Dandy an' Virg, all kivered wid gole like yer granpappy in de pictyur? Sho 's yer bawn, honey, nothin' ain't gwine ter happen ter dem chillun!"

CHAPTER II.

“THE CUNNEL’S VALLY.”

A CORNER of *La Rose Blanche*,” we always called it — the queer, roomy old house down in the French quarter of New Orleans where great-uncle Selden lived.

On the outside it was as different as possible from our wide-galleried, dormer-windowed plantation-house set in the midst of green lawns and shaded by embowering trees. For its odd little balconies with their curiously-wrought iron railings, hung directly over the narrow, noisy street; its sloping, tile-edged roof touched shoulders on either side with other peakéd roofs, and almost rubbed noses too in friendly greeting with the tall stuccoed building just across the way. Its great arched entrance-door, whose griffin-headed knocker filled our childish hearts at once with terror and

delight, opened into a long, dim, tunnel-like corridor, where a little stream of yellow river-water rippled musically along by the wall over the flags. The spacious open court at the end of the corridor was paved with cool-looking stone. A fountain played there, sprinkling the broad-leaved plants and curling ferns that grew about the weather-stained rim of the marble basin. Orange-trees and oleanders, that seemed to me then to be always in bloom, were set here and there in brightly-painted tubs. In one corner stood a row of gigantic Eastern water-jars — "Forty-Thief jars," brother Tom said they were! — their bulgy sides mossy-green and glistening in the sunlight. A talkative old parrot who greeted every incomer with a torrent of shrill gombo-French, had his perch upon the outstretched (handless) arm of a discolored statue leaning against the carved balustrade of the stairway that led up into the big square hall. It was down that very stairway that great-great-grand'mère, dark-eyed, slim and graceful, in the flowered brocade and high-heeled slippers of her portrait at Rose Blanche came, leaning

on great-great-grandpapa's arm ; and here in this very court waited the sleek, fat negro torch-bearers that night to light them on their way to the Inauguration-Ball of the first American Governor.

But different as its exterior was from La Rose Blanche, when once you got inside of its airy rooms, you found there a familiar home-look. The spice-jars by the fire-place in the parlor, and the Sèvres vases and silver candlesticks on the high wooden mantel, were disposed in exactly the same fashion as those at the plantation-house ; the same portraits were on the wall, following you about with soft smiling eyes ; the claw-footed tables and the great mahogany beds with damask-hung baldachins — even the flowered rugs and the embroidered piano-cover (not yet converted into blankets for the soldiers) had a look of kin with like things at home.

We were often at this pleasant corner of La Rose Blanche, especially during the Carnival-time of the short, bright winters, when we crowded the little balconies to watch the processions of maskers in the street below, and to listen to the holiday

music; or threaded the thronged banquettes ourselves, in Mammy’s charge, tricked out in grotesque mask and domino, gleefully dusting the spectators with flour and pelting them with bonbons.

But now, the processions that we watched from the balconies, and that passed and repassed all day long had lost their merry Mardi-Gras look. The masks had disappeared and in their place were grey uniforms that glittered with gold-lace and shone with brass-buttons. The narrow streets of the old town echoed beneath the steady swinging step of marching troops; strange flags fluttered on the air; the throb of drums was everywhere. The first gun of the great Civil War had been fired at Fort Sumter and our newly-enlisted soldiers were hurrying off singly, in squads, in detachments, in companies, eager, anxious, alert, with beating hearts, and spirits high with hope.

The Selden Rifles had already gone to the front, and with them our boys, Tom and Hart; and mother had come down from the Plantation to say another and even a sadder good-by; for father was a captain in great-uncle Selden’s bat-

talion of artillery ; and the battalion had received its marching orders.

I was down in the court-yard the morning they went away, with the four little boys who sat quite still on a bench under the latticed gallery, not knowing what to make of the strange tumult in the placid old house. The sound of smothered sobs came down to us and mingled with the "*Comment ça va ? Mo pas connais !*" of the old parrot.

Frederic, with a bit of lath on his shoulder, stood erect and motionless by the fountain where little Marse Charley had placed him half an hour before with solemn orders not to desert his post, "not even if they shoots you down dead ! "

Father came down first and went away. We ran along the corridor after him and stood in the doorway watching him down the long, crowded street, until a passing group with a flag moving in its midst seemed to swallow him up, and then we came dejectedly back to our bench in the court. Frederic was still standing sentry by the fountain.

Another step sounded on the stair and great-uncle Selden, tall and trim and soldierly in his

grey uniform, with a sword dangling at his side and a long black plume floating from his slouched hat, came slowly down.

Frederic dropped his bit of lath and ran forward.

“Whar is you gwine, Marster?” he demanded with affectionate familiarity.

Uncle Selden paused a moment to lay a kindly hand upon the little woolly head, and looking down into the small black face uplifted wonderfully to his own he replied gravely:

“I am going to the war, Frederic.”

We all swarmed around him for a good-by; then his quick step echoed across the flags, his spurs rang along the shadowy corridor, the heavy street-door opened and closed with a bang behind him. Frederic pattered after him with the rest of us, and when we came in we left him squeezing his round face between the bars of the outer *grille* and calling out over and over “Whar is you gwine, Marster? Whar is you gwine, Marster?”

He was only seven years old, little Frederic; but he proudly called himself and was known to all the Rose Blanche folks as “the Cunnel’s

vally." Ever since he could toddle he had trotted after uncle Selden, meeting him at the street door when he came in and soberly taking possession of his hat and cane ; fetching his newspaper, warming his slippers, tugging at his boots, raking out coals for his pipe—while his own "daddy," the Colonel's fat, old body-servant who had attended him through the Mexican war, stood behind his master's chair, grinning broadly, or growling in an undertone at the youngster according to his humor. "Whar is you been, Marster?" the little "vally" would cry imperiously, as the Colonel came up the corridor. "Whar is you gwine, Marster?" he would insist whenever the Colonel took up his hat and cane to go out. "Dat chile am jes de Cunnel's shadder," Uncle Joshua used to chuckle when they came up to La Rose Blanche.

We went back to the Plantation the same day that father and uncle Selden went away. On the fourth morning afterward, Aunt Sara, Frederic's mother, lingered nervously about the doorway of her mistress's room after her duties there were finished.

“What is it, Sara?” asked aunt Selden at last, lifting her pale, tear-stained face from the prayer-book on her knees.

“I hates to ‘sturb yer, Mis’ Ray, ‘deed I does, seein’ as how you is so ‘flicted ‘bout Marster. But, we is done look high an’ low, fur de Cunnel’s vally, ma’am, an’ we cyant *fin’* him. We ain’t had de luck ter fin’ dat chile no-whurs, Mis’ Ray!”

“When did you miss him?” aunt Selden asked.

“Marster he leave lak in the mawnin’ un’ de Cunnel’s vally he ‘spear in de evenin’ o’ de same day lak,” and poor Aunt Sara covered her face with her apron and sobbed aloud.

Aunt Selden sprang up alarmed. “O, Sara,” she cried reproachfully, “why didn’t you come to me sooner!”

“I did’n had de heart to ‘sturb yer, Mis’ Ray,” persisted Sara.

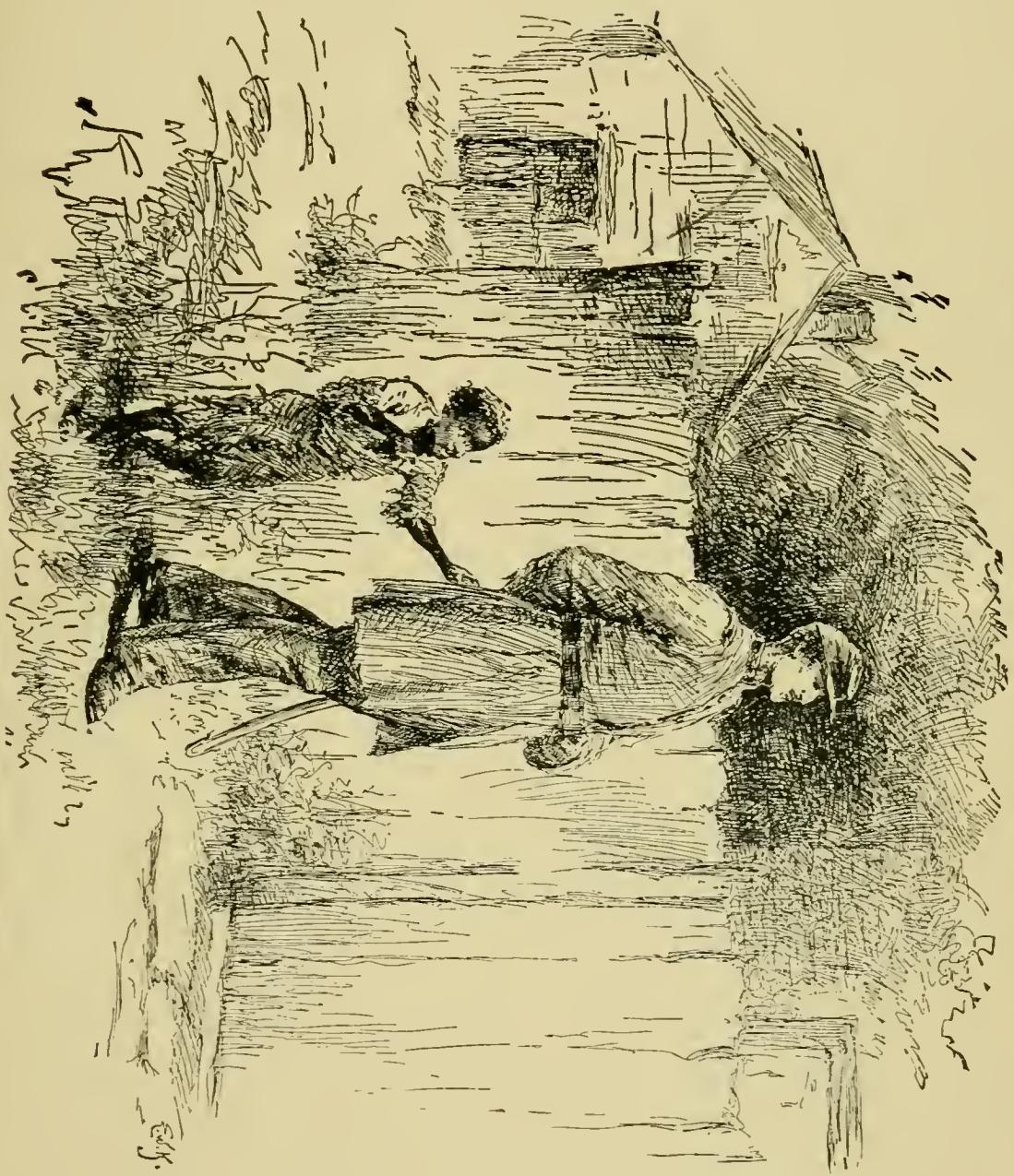
Search was made at once and in every direction. The police was notified. Aunt Selden herself drove in her carriage with Sara on the seat beside her, from house to house making inquiries. A description of the lost child was posted about

the city and a reward offered for the recovery of the Colonel's pet — the bright little pickaninny so dear to the whole household.

All this solicitude was in vain. The boy could not be found. All sadly agreed at last that in attempting to follow his Master he must have wandered down to the levee, where once or twice he had been permitted to accompany the Colonel, and that he had slipped into the great turbid river whose swift current had borne his little lifeless body away.

It was nearly a year later that a young officer was walking one morning slowly and listlessly along one of the weed-grown streets of a straggling little village in Virginia. His thoughts were hovering gloomily over the trampled field some hundred yards away, scarcely relieved yet of the ghastly débris strewn there by the battle of a few days before. He did not feel the timid touch upon his hand, nor notice the piping and plaintive voice which asked.

“Please, Marse Jim, is you *seen* Marster?”



" PLEASE, MARSE JIM, IS YOU SEFN MARSTER ? "

But a more impatient tug at his sleeve roused him from his abstraction and the reiterated question brought him to a stand-still, “Please, Marse Jim, is you *seen* Marster?”

He looked down at the little bunch of rags which stood at his knee.

“What do you want, you little black ape?” he asked frowning, while a vague remembrance stirred at his heart.

“Don’ you ‘member me, Marse Jim? I’se de Cunnel’s vally. Sholy you ‘members *me!*—Marse Jim, please, is you *seen* Marster?”

The young officer groaned and covered his face with his hands. The “Cunnel’s vally” stood with his head on one side regarding him wistfully. It was a very forlorn and wretched little “vally” indeed! His round cheeks had fallen in; his great eyes were hollow and sunken; his pinched little body was bruised and sore. The few soiled and tattered rags he wore hardly covered his nakedness; his mud-encrusted feet were bare; the long wool on his head was unkempt and knotted with leaves and bits of stick and straw.

The young officer turned presently, leaving Frederic's question unanswered. He afterward remembered that the child never asked it again. He took the half-starved waif to his own quarters and fed and clothed him ; and soon after, having a short furlough, he hurried home taking the "Cunnel's vally" with him.

We were all there when they came — and it was our last visit to that corner of Rose Blanche for a long time, for hardly a week later it was that Farragut's capturing fleet came up the river and planted the stars and stripes once more upon the City Hall !

A cry of wonder and rejoicing — with that undcurrent of pain which all rejoicing had in those days — burst from us all when cousin Jim came up the stairway leading little Frederic by the hand.

In the hall where all the household, black and white, swarmed about him with greeting and questioning, Frederic's eyes wandered around in mute inquiry. At last we saw them rest upon uncle Selden's portrait with the funeral-wreath twined

about it and the torn flag drooping on the wall below. A strange look crept slowly over his face ; his meagre body trembled from head to foot, his lip quivered.

“Don’t tell him ! Don’t tell him, Sara !” aunt Selden moaned, dropping her head on Sara’s faithful breast. “You have no need to tell him ! Don’t you see that he *knows* !”

“I knows dat *my* Marster is done shot dead,” said the “Cunnel’s vally” with a short dry sob.

No one ever knew what the poor little soul had suffered, or what he had seen during those long months. To all questions he replied by a curious far-away gaze that filled the questioner with a kind of terror. Once only, when he had been sitting silent for hours, as was his wont, before the kitchen-fire, with his head dropped upon his breast and his eyes half-closed, he said suddenly, but without turning his head, or lifting his heavy eyelids :

“Mammy, dey uz er heap er white gentermens layin’ on de groun’. Dey uz all kivered wid blood. One genterman — whar *look* lak Marster’s li’l Marse Hart — he ax me ter fotch him er drink er

water — an' — I — did'n had no water fer ter gi' him."

He remained a weakly, broken, and prematurely-old little creature always; but always tenderly cared for by the family of his beloved "Marster."

The other day just before he died — in the old house down in the French quarter, which is unchanged; even the old parrot is still there singing and scolding in gombo-French just as he used to do when the Colonel walked about the court with his little "vally" at his heels — the other day when Frederic lay dying beside the open window, a company of holiday soldiers passed along the street. Their feet rang on the pavement; the drum-beat throbbed on the air — the band was playing "Dixie." At the sound he opened his eyes and gazed anxiously around the room. "Marse Jim," he murmured entreatingly, "please, is you *seen* Marster?"

The next moment a joyful smile swept over his emaciated face; a light flashed into his sunken eyes; a quick cry as of recognition escaped from his lips, and then — He had found "Marster!"

CHAPTER III.

MANDY'S DOLL-PARTY.

MANDY gave herself a good many airs over her doll-party.

“Case you knows, Miss Ma'y,” she said as we swept the leaves out of the play-house and settled Sissy-Maria, and Adelmina, and Lodore, and the rest of the company on the bit of carpet in one corner; “you knows when you gin yo’ doll-party las’ week Florence-Pope did’n had dat new cape o’ hern; an’ yo’ maw did’n had no loaf-sugar, an’ no reesons, an’ no sho’-nough coffee, like she got now, whar Marse Jeems done saunt her fum de cose.”

“But you ain’t got no sho’-nough coffee,” I put in jealously.

“I knows I ain’t,” returned Mandy with a toss of the head. “But Mis’ Lucy done gin me er

cup er loaf-sugar, an' de reesons, an' I gwine back
ter de house terreckly ter git er hunk er poun'-
cake she done promis' me, whar Mammy bakin'
now. Dat cake o' yo'ne want no mo'n 'lasses-cake
an' *po'* at dat!"

My heart was beginning to swell under these taunts. But just here Lorena who was holding the twins (pinned to her dress-sleeves) toppled over on her face dragging Sissy-Maria and Florence-Pope down in her fall.

"O dear!" I groaned, as I picked them up and brushed the dust from their clothes, "'f I only had a nuss what could bend her arms and her legs and could sit down—like the Mullenses," I added with a sigh.

"Dem jinted Mullenses wuz nice," assented Mandy in a sympathetic tone. This restored good feeling between us and we proceeded harmoniously with our arrangements.

We were down in a far corner of the grounds, in the shadows of the rose-hedge—white with bloom—which bordered the lane. Between us and the house stretched the long avenues of the

orange-plantation where the sunlight hardly sifted through the thickly-woven leaves, but the winds went softly, stirring the flowering grasses underneath the trees. A little way back were the stables, and the roomy carriage-house, and the cribs with their hay-piled lofts. Then, again, the feathery green of the hedge ; and beyond all, the great yellow river that glinted and gleamed under the blue sky.

The little nook itself was overhung on one side by lithe, long-reaching festoons from the rose-hedge ; and on the other by a low-branched wild-peach tree. A blossoming honeysuckle covered the screen-like trellis at the back, and swung its tendrils along the bench where my brothers used to sit, making believe to study their Latin verbs while Tom Dennison, their tutor, walked up and down the orange-avenues with sweet cousin Nellie Branscome.

“Dar now !” said Mandy at last, stepping back to survey the table which looked very fine indeed, with a big blue cup of white sugar at one end, and a bunch of raisins at the other, and bits of

broken china — gilt-edged, some of them were, and one even had a dainty moss-rose bud on it — along the sides. “Dar now! Spec Mammy done bakin’ fer Mis’ Lucy by dis time. Jes you watch dat table, Mis’ Ma’y, an’ keep dem borodacious chillun fum eatin’ up de party, whilse I run fetch de poun’-cake.”

She darted down the weed-grown path in the direction of the stable-yard, and in a moment was out of sight.

No sooner was she gone than Sissy-Maria, in the very squeakiest tone I could assume for her, demanded to be “taken out visitin’.”

“No, Sissy-Maria, my child,” I replied in my most maternal voice, “Mis’ Dixylan’ is down to Nu-Leens, an’ you can’t by no means go to see Florence-Pope.”

Sissy-Maria began to cry and I was shaking my finger at her and scolding, when a voice which seemed to come from somewhere over my head, said, “Don’t scold Sissy-Maria! I’ll play ‘ladies’ with you till Mandy comes back.”

I jumped up and looked around bewildered.

At first I thought it must be my brother Tom come back from the war. I peered up into the wild-peach, half-expecting to see his mischievous eyes sparkling down at me. I ran around behind the trellis where both the boys used sometimes to crouch, waiting to jump out at me as I stepped in the play-house. A low chuckle of amusement followed me as I ran back alarmed at finding no one in sight. I looked up again at the sound, and then I saw laughing down at me from the other side of the hedge a sunburned boyish face, which disappeared immediately, and almost immediately re-appeared at that very hole in the hedge — a little choked now with interwoven vines — through which my brother Tom used to creep in and out. The next moment a boy came crawling into the play-house, dragging a gun after him.

He stood up and gave himself a shake, and leaned his gun against the trunk of the wild-peach, and then sat down on the bench and looked at me with a funny twist in his eyes that made me feel at home with him at once.

He was about as old as brother Tom, I thought,

and as tall and slim, with brown curling hair like his, and frank sunny blue eyes; and there were brass-buttons on his jacket and stripes down the legs of his trousers, by which signs I knew he must be "in the war."

We gazed at each other a moment in silence, and then, as he took up Adelmina and began dancing her on his knee, I asked from the head of the table where I was seated,—

"Who are you?"

"Well—I'm one of your new neighbors," he replied, hesitating a little.

"Oh!" said I, wondering if they had come to live at Bon Soldat, which had been vacant ever since Captain Brion was killed at Bull Run, and Madame Brion had gone away, taking Angelique and Odille, my friends and playmates, with her. "I hope your mother likes it here?" I added, with a wish to be polite.

He looked at me queerly and for a minute I thought he might be going to cry.

"Have you got any sisters?" I went on without waiting for a reply to my last observation.

He brightened up. "Yes," he cried. "One. The jolliest little chap! About your size. And you look just like her!"

I was a good deal excited over this possible companion of mine and I poured out a volume of questions about her, all of which he answered with an eager delight which almost equalled my own.

In less time than it takes to tell it I knew that her name was "Ally," and she had five dolls, and a pony, and a dog named "Cæsar," and was nearly nine years old (like me); and she practised her scales some, but didn't like to do it, and generally cried when she didn't get what she wanted — like me!

"Are you in the war?" I demanded, returning abruptly to my visitor's own personal history. He nodded. "I s'pose you've got a furlough?" I went on. "My brother Tom is in the war. And my brother Hart is. And cousin Wesley Branscome is. And now father is too. And there ain't no men left 'round here anywhere, nor boys neither. I'm glad you've come. — O dear!"

This last exclamation was provoked by Lorena,

who had lurched forward, as she had a habit of doing, and sprawled herself and the twins in the dust.

The boy gathered them up so gently, and so carefully restored them to their place, that I presently found myself relating to him the oft-repeated history of the Mullenses, a certain unfortunate family of wooden dolls, whose arms and legs worked so beautifully, and who had suffered martyrdom at the hands of my brother Tom and his body-servant, Dandy.

My strange visitor laughed more than was polite, I thought, at this sad story, and I retired within myself and sat eying him, pouting and distrustful.

"O come, little Sis, don't be mad," he cried coaxingly. "Let's play 'ladies.' I play 'ladies' with Ally. But I used to growl about it sometimes," he added as if to himself, shaking his head ruefully. "Wouldn't I be good to her now, if I had a chance, though! Who are you going to be?"

"Oh!" — I was all good-nature again — "I'm

always Mis' Meddlelan — from the song, you know :

*His torchers sat thy temper tote,
Meddlelan, my Meddlelan.*

I think it's such a pretty name, don't you?"

"Yes," he returned gravely ; "I do. And must I be Mis' Dixylan'?"

He certainly was a delightful boy. You would never believe how he doctored Lodore's sore throat ; and how he scolded Lorena for taking the twins out in the sun ; and how he listened when I told him how hard it was to get my floors waxed "p'operly," and what a good "subserstute" parched potatoes were for sho'-nough coffee ; and such like talk proper between ladies visitin' together. He was a great deal nicer than Mandy to play with. I told him so and I was even saying that I hoped Mandy would stay up at the house and —

He jumped up tumbling Florence-Pope and Adelmina to the ground, seized his gun and disappeared, all in a second, I never knew how, from my bewildered sight.

And here came Uncle Joshua running bare-headed through the orange-grove and calling at every step: "Little Miss! Miss Ma'y! Miss Ma'y! Whar is you? whar is you?"

And Mammy panted along behind him crying, "O my chile! my chile! Dey is took my chile!" They uttered a fervent "Bress de Lord!" as they caught sight of me, and a moment later Uncle Joshua had gathered me up in his strong arms and was flying back to the house, Mammy following and praying as she ran. I was dumb with astonishment and fright, and only when my mother, who clasped me to her breast at the foot of the steps, had brought me into her own room, where the four little boys, and cousin Nell, and Mandy and all the house-maids were huddled together, did I dare to ask what it all meant. I was sure that my father was taken prisoner, or that one, or both, of my brothers were killed. "Oh! what is it?" I implored, trembling and clinging to mother.

"The Yankees are come," everybody in the room said at once in an awful whisper. Even little Percy breathed "*Yantees is tum!*"

I stood a moment speechless and terrified. Then the extent of my own special calamity burst upon me. "O, Mandy, Mandy!" I shrieked, "they'll *capshur* Sissy-Maria, an' Florence-Pope, an' Lodore an' Lorena, an' the twins, an' Adel-mi-na!"

The two or three days that followed were like a dream. Mandy and I and the four little boys were shut up with cousin Nell in mother's room. Mother herself came and went with a white, solemn face, Mammy always at her elbow, and sometimes Uncle Joshua, who held long, mysterious consultations with her. Unusual noises from the outside reached us through the shuttered windows which we were forbidden to approach. Heavy footsteps echoed along the halls and in the rooms below. Then gradually these sounds ceased and an unnatural quiet seemed to reign over everything. I had never been in the house so long before since I could remember, except when I had the measles, and I seemed to myself to be shut up in one of those enchanted castles which brother Tom used to tell about when we gathered around

him on the front steps in the twilight. And the thought of Sissy-Maria and the rest was heavy upon my heart.

So, at last, one afternoon when mother and Mammy were out of the way, and cousin Nell asleep on the lounge, and the little boys squabbling over their playthings, Mandy and I stole on tiptoe into the hall and out upon the veranda and down the steps. I smothered an exclamation at sight of the cluster of white tents over by the sugar-house, with a flag floating from a flag-pole in their midst! And on the warm, sleepy air came the faint sound of a drum.

The lawn had a curiously deserted and desolate look; scraps of paper, and rags, and corn-shucks, were strewed over its unkempt grass; its low hedges were trampled and broken; the rose-vines were torn from the trellises and lay withering on the ground.

I noted all this wonderingly, as Mandy drew me around the corner of the house in the direction of the stables. "Case," she whispered, while we crept stealthily along, "we mus' go by de little

crib-lof'. I'se done brought some corn-pone fer ter feed Mis' Hamilton."

"Mrs. Hamilton" was my own big yellow pet hen, and she was hatching out a brood of chicks under our care.

The stable-doors were wide open, and the stalls deserted. The cribs also seemed to be empty, their doors mostly swinging by one hinge, or wrenched off entirely. Not a soul was in sight, and not a creature, of the many creatures feathered or four-footed, that were wont to make the stable-yard so busy and so noisy.

All at once Mandy clutched my arm. "My lan'! Miss Ma'y," she whispered, "'f dar ain't one er dem borodacious Yankees now!" My heart flew into my mouth. I tried to run, but seemed rooted to the ground, and my gaze was fascinated by a pair of blue-clad legs—which had a strangely familiar look, somehow—dangling from the window of the little crib, and feeling about as if in search of the top of a short plank leaning ladder-wise against the wall. The head and shoulders of their owner were still in the hay-loft and invisible.

Mandy waited a second and then marched boldly forward and threw down the plank. Then reaching up she seized one of the legs and gave it a violent jerk. A voice above remonstrated angrily, but she held on, and emboldened by her example I caught the other leg as it came within reach, and — there we were in a confused heap on the ground — Mandy and myself and the Yankee ! He sprang to his feet scowling frightfully at Mandy, but as his eyes fell upon me his face changed.

“Hello, Mis’ Meddlelan !” he cried joyfully.

It was my playfellow !

“Are you a Yankee ?” I asked soberly, and not quite reassured.

“Well, yes,” he admitted. “I guess I am — a sort of a one.”

“An’ what was you doin’ in my hay-lof’ ?”

“Hunting eggs,” he replied promptly. “I’m awful fond of eggs. Don’t your brother Tom like ‘em ?”

At this my severity melted away. I could almost see my brother Tom sliding down the

side of that very crib, with his hat full of eggs to roast in Mammy's fire for you and me, sis' !

But Mandy poked her head out of the loft which she had reached in some way known only to herself. "Miss Ma'y," she wailed down to me, "de nes' is broke up an' dey is tooken Mis' Hamilton ! " I ceased to smile and burst into tears.

"Oh ! don't cry, little Sis, don't cry," implored my Yankee. "I didn't do it, 'pon honor I didn't. And I've brought you a hired girl. Come see her."

"A what ? " I dropped the corner of my apron and stared at him.

"A new help. Didn't you say you wanted one to nurse the twins ? Come ! "

He took my hand and raced me gleefully along the path to the play-house.

Well, there was everything just as I had left it, except that a long line of red ants was crawling across the table and up the sides of the blue cup and down into the sugar ; and some bees were buzzing over the bunch of raisins. The dolls were sitting primly upon their bit of carpet — even Adelmina and Florence-Pope had somehow got

back to their places. Oh! and here was Lorena idle like a grand lady by Sissy-Maria. And the twins were clasped in the arms of a big wooden doll, with flowing scarlet hair and beautiful staring black eyes. I flew to this stranger and took possession of her with a cry of ecstasy. She had on a dark-blue flannel dress with a belt made out of the same scarlet silk whose ravelled threads composed her scanty locks. Her skin was a little rough, and her nose uneven, but she could sit down, having a lovely bend to her knees, and her nicely-jointed arms moved both at shoulder and elbow.

The boy stood by the bench, looking down at me and smiling. "I'm glad you like her," he said. "Her name is Lucindy-Keturah. I whittled her out myself, and I fixed her hair and sewed her gown."

"Oh!" I sighed, "she's just *be-u-tiful*! Has Ally got one like her?"

His laughing face became a trifle sober.

"You're good, *good* if you *are* a Yankee," I went on. "I'm goin' to run and show her to



"HER NAME IS LUCINDA-KETURAH," SAID THE YANKEE.

mother. Where is your mother?" I broke off with a sudden recollection of the new neighbors.

The Yankee boy's lip trembled ; a flush came into his cheek. "Home," he said briefly. "With Ally. In Massachusetts." All at once he covered his face with his hands and sobbed outright. "Oh!" he cried, "if I could only see my mother."

I didn't know at all what to say, and so I stood quite still for a little while. And then I reached up and patted his elbow timidly.

He took his hands away from his face and looked at me ; then stooped over and laid his cheek wet with warm tears against my own ; and then without another word walked slowly down the hedge-path. Presently I saw him rise lightly into the air as he leaped over the hedge, and the sound of his footsteps echoed up the lane and died away.

"Miss Ma'y," said Mandy solemnly, as we stole back to the house, "you jes ought ter be *shame* er yo' sef. I gwine tell yo' maw dat you done talk to er Yankee, an' done 'cepted a nuss fum er Yankee—an 'er Yankee whar come ter

steal aiggs at dat. Yo' maw gwine ter be powerful upsot, and she gwine ter scole yur an' mek you bu'n up that Lucindy-Kitury, sho's you bawn."

But my mother did not scold when I told her the story. She listened with a soft smile on her face, and unshed tears, whose meaning I vaguely understood, in her large dark eyes. And when I had finished she took Lucindy-Keturah and laid her hand almost caressingly upon the shock of scarlet hair, and looked at the clumsy stitches in the blue dress, with a little laugh that died off into a sob down in her throat.

And that night, somewhere "'way in the night," I awoke and saw her kneeling over by the window with the white moonlight all around her and her face shining out of it as the Holy Mother's face shines out of the glory that is about her in the picture over the altar in our little church down by the river.

I sat up in bed and asked, as I had asked many and many a time before during the past year,

"Mother, are you praying for father?"

"Yes, dear," she replied softly.

"And for your Boys in Gray who are so far away from you?"

"Yes, dear," she said more softly still. "For my Boys in Gray. And for the Boy in Blue too who is so far away from his mother. And for his mother, God help her! God help us all!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISH-RAG BONNET.

THE four little boys were down at Mammy's cabin the day she planted the dish-rag gourd seed. And from that time on they used to troop there every morning, like four little Jacks out of the Bean-Stalk Story to see how the vine was coming on.

“Dat ar gode,” Mammy would say, watching it fondly as it crept up the sides of the cabin, stretching out its soft little tendrils to clasp here a knot, there a corner of the flung-open shutter, and spreading everywhere its broad green leaves with their pale fuzzy lining, “dat ar gode-vine gwine ter be ez handy ez er town-sto’ o’ er tradin’-boat. Mis’ Lucy ain’t gwine ter ha’ ter worry no mo’ ‘bout dish-rags an’ aperns fer dem triflin’ no-’count house-gals ; an’ *ez* ter *bonnits* ! Miss Nellie say ez

how over ter Marse Jeems's Plantation all five er
de young ladies is done got dey bonnits fum er
gode vine like dis!"

The little boys talked a great deal among themselves about this wonderful vine. Would the aprons (they asked each other) be all blue like those Mammy gave out every two days to M'lindy and 'Riah and Sophy? or striped red and green like the one she herself sometimes put on of afternoons? Would the dish-rags be white with a tape-loop in one corner? And the bonnets? They took note of the bonnets in church one Sunday, and the next morning they counted up, together, seventeen—all different—from Madame Michel's rusty black straw with its white inside ruching, to the fluffy pink thing—a network of crêpe and rose-buds—worn by Mademoiselle Elise, her pretty grand-daughter from New Orleans.

It was little Percy who found the first flower, away up under the overhanging eaves. "Oh, a yeller bonnet's tummin'! A yeller bonnet's tummin'!" he shouted to the others; and almost cried when it proved to be only a flower!

But the yellow trumpets that soon hung the vine from the ground to the very top of the peaked roof were pretty enough, and so were the long, slim, emerald-green gourds that presently began to show under the leaves and to thrust themselves out into the warm sunshine. “An’ bimeby,” prophesied Charley confidently, “them gourds is goin’ to bust and bloom into bonnits — all over Mammy’s cabin — seventeen kinds of ‘em. An’ into aperns. *An’* into dish-rags!”

Meantime they came, as I have said, every day to look at the vine and to play in its shadow. And no wonder! For this was the very cosiest spot in all the Quarter. Mammy’s cabin stood squarely across one end of the long double-row of white-washed cabins that stretched between the further edge of the grounds and the rear cane-fields. In the little patch in front were squares of cabbages and beans; and of sweet corn whose bronzing tassels tossed in the sun; and of artichokes whose dainty cones nestled under curious ashy-green leaves; and of egg-plants with their purplish-red globes; and of ochra and tomatoes and garlic.

Hedge-like rows of sage and fennel and rosemary and lavender bordered these tiny squares, and in the corners grew stout rose-bushes weighted with great pale-pink "damasks," filling all the air with a delicious odor which is like no other perfume in the world. To my dying day, I am sure, that a whiff of one of these old-fashioned damasks will bring before my eyes a picture of Mammy's cabin, vine-covered and tranquil, with its one window-shutter flung back, and a broken tea-cup on the sill filled with wide open roses scattering their pink petals on the ground below; and a thin smoke curling lazily from the squat chimney; and the little boys playing about the step expectant of hot gingerbread; and Mammy herself bustling about the wide fireplace within; and the winds of summer stirring softly by from the river; and a tender blue sky—that seems to bend so low that one has only to reach up a hand to touch it—over all.

Four or five great umbrella-china trees shaded the back-yard where generation after generation of big-jointed goslings and downy chicks and

fuzzy ducklings ran noisily about, with Jupe, Uncle Joshua's lean brown old hound, to watch them and to keep out intruders.

Here, too, toddled and tumbled and frolicked the babies of the Quarter, when their mothers were at work in the cane-fields. Old Aunt Rose, withered and wrinkled, but tall and straight, who sat in a big chair in the cabin-door minding them, came over, with Grandpa's Uncle Silas, from Africa, where she was a Princess, with a thousand "niggers" of her own—so she used to tell us as we hovered around her, half-frightened, half-fascinated by her strange broken speech and hollow voice, and by the curious marks which banded her forehead and circled her leathery neck and arms.

One morning—the slim gourds were growing longer and longer and bursting-time must surely be at hand!—the four little boys and Aunt Ca'line's six-year-old "triplers," Marthy and Mary and Laz'rus, got into a rough-and-tumble conflict all together. I don't think that any of them ever remembered afterwards what it was about, for just as Aunt Rose fell upon them all with her

terrible frown and her long switch, the back cane-field seemed suddenly to swarm with soldiers, who came leaping across the ditch and over the low hedge. Their brass buttons glittered as they swept past the cabin and poured into the house yard and took possession of the kitchen and smoke-house and surged up the steps of the back gallery.

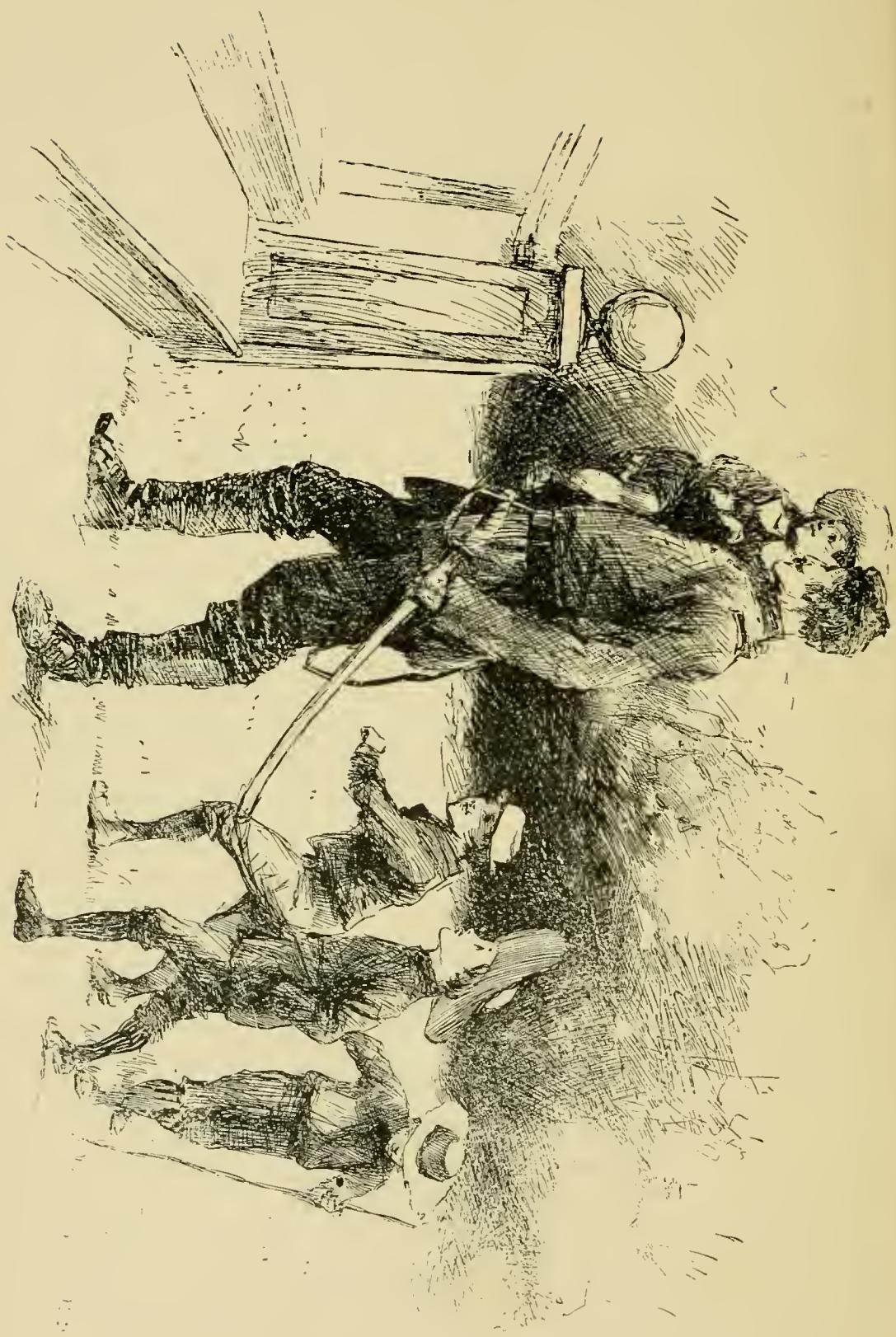
There was a great commotion and a vast deal of confusion and of hurrying to and fro, but several of the men stopped to shake hands with the little boys and pat their curly heads, when they came timidly across from the Quarter and edged their way through the crowd to the house.

“Is you done whipped de Yantees?” asked little Percy of a tall fellow who had a sword dangling from his belt. The soldier laughed and said not yet; and then gathered him in his arms and carried him up the steps — the other three treading close upon his heels — and put him down inside the hall where mother was. And by the time Uncle Joshua had found me and brought me up from the play-house, they all knew that the new-

comers were none other than "the Yankees" themselves.

"What will they do to our gourd-vine?" they used often to ask in the days that followed, trotting after Mammy, or tugging at mother's skirts whenever she came into the room where we were.

As we became accustomed to the stillness which settled over everything after the first noisy week when the blue-coated strangers roamed at will over the grounds, or lounged through the house, we were allowed to creep out on the veranda and listen to the faint sounds of music and laughter and life that floated across from the camp over by the sugar-house. Our own familiar home-noises — the cheery clucking of hens, the patient low of cows, the neighing of horses, the clatter of looms and whir of spinning-wheels — even the hurrying bustle of the house-girls with their brushes and brooms and Mammy's imperious voice scolding them and keeping them in order — all this seemed to have ceased forever. The kitchen was empty; the outhouses were all closed; the very Quarter itself seemed deserted.



"IS YOU DONE WHIPPED DE VANTRES?" ASKED LITTLE PERCY.

Only sometimes a squad of soldiers tramped up the lane toward the camp ; or a single shot somewhere broke the drowsy stillness ; and sometimes in the early gray of the morning strange sounds came from the river, and great formless things, half-seen through the overhanging mist, surged by on the yellow flood, breathing heavily.

And then, for a moment, a little of the old life and activity would come back. The cabin-doors would open suddenly and the field-hands would pour out, eager and questioning, and the house-servants would crowd around the steps, or gather on the ragged lawn, until mother came out to reassure them.

But, at last, one afternoon — it was after the long summer had faded into the fall and the blue haze of a dying November overhung the waving bluish-green cane-fields and the yet-blooming hedges — when we looked over toward the camp we saw that the flag-pole stood up slender and bare against the sky ; the white tents had disappeared ! And presently we heard the sound of a fife and drum. It came nearer and nearer, and

all at once there were the soldiers coming with a steady echoing tread along the lane, with the pretty striped flag moving in their midst.

Before mother's warning voice could reach us we had scampered down to the gate — Mandy and I and the four little boys — to see them go by. M'lindy and 'Riah and Sophy and the others were already there looking on wonderingly.

The tall fellow in front, the one with a sword at his belt who had carried little Percy up the steps, saw us on the fence and took off his hat and smiled as he went by. And so did nearly all of the others. Then the little boys waved their ragged home-made palmetto hats and hurrahed gayly and the soldiers laughed and cheered too.

Suddenly among the very last I caught sight of a face that I knew !

My Yankee playfellow's cap was pulled down upon his forehead ; his cheeks were flushed ; his eyes seemed to have lost their merry twinkle. My heart swelled as I looked at him, and a confused vision of my brother Hart marching off to the war, and little Ally, and her five dolls, and my

mother kneeling and praying in the white moonlight, and another and unknown mother kneeling too and praying, rose before me.

“Good-by, Mis’ Meddlelan,” he called out waving his hand, and looking back when he had passed.

“Good-by,” I called after him, “good-by! good”—

And then I wondered why my throat should fill up, and why the tears should come streaming down my cheeks.

The boat that directly swung away from the landing and went puffing up the river, only carried them a few miles away. They had changed their quarters, that was all. And a blue-coat still drifted occasionally along the lane, or between the rows of cane in the fields; or even sauntered in and sat for awhile on the steps of the veranda.

But the spell was broken, and La Rose Blanche awoke. Some of the cabins in the Quarter were empty and remained closed; but the most took on their old air of noisy life. The long-disused weaving-room was opened and the clatter of looms and

whirr of spinning-wheels began again. A little movement even re-commenced about the stable-yard where a few forlorn mules stood in the broken stalls munching nubbins. In the house M'lindy and 'Riah and Sophy bustled about flourishing brooms and dusters, cleaning windows, shaking rugs, and giggling and dodging Mammy's wrathful hand as of old. On the lawn Jake and Grief raked the dead leaves into heaps and burned them under Uncle Joshua's supervision, and Uncle Joshua himself, spade in hand, pottered about the rose-garden singing, as he always did when he had a spade in his hand, "*Possum up de gum-stump, coony in de holler,*" while mother and Cousin Nellie went from trellis to trellis tying up vines and snipping off dead twigs and putting things to rights generally.

Of course the very first day of our release from the house, the four little boys went whooping down to Mammy's cabin to inspect the dish-rag-gourd-vine.

They stopped and looked at each other in a kind of silent dismay when they saw it. The vine

was there, oh, yes ! But the leaves had nearly all dropped off and the few that remained were brown and shriveled. The pretty, long green gourds had grown longer and bigger indeed, and hung thick against the cabin-walls and lay shoulder to shoulder on the sloping roof, but they had become discolored and shrunken and ugly.

“ You neen’ter min’ dat, chillen ! ” Mammy exclaimed, appearing in the cabin-door. “ De dish-rags, an’ aperns, *an’ bonnits* is sholy inside o’ dem godes. I gwine ter tote er armful ter Mis’ Lucy one o’ dese days an’ ax her to ‘splain ‘bout ‘em.”

They stood by, a little dubious, the day she tore down the withered vine and picked off the gourds, laying them in heaps on the ground ; but they followed her gleefully when she went to the house, Charley and Sam and Will each hugging a load of the musky-smelling things ; but little Percy rode triumphantly on Mammy’s shoulder with a big gingerbread man hot from Mammy’s own oven clasped in his arms — for it was his birthday.

They looked on with wide-eyed interest while mother peeled off the outer rind of the gourds and

ran her scissors through the pale yellow spongy mass inside, and cut open carefully the odd little seed-chambers.

“I don’t think we shall have any aprons for M’lindy and ’Riah and Sophy,” she said, as she spread out one delicate roll of network after another; and she smiled down at the excited little faces around her. “But here are really dozens of dish-rags for them; and now we are going to find one bonnet at least!”

What a time we all made over that bonnet to be sure! How we watched her needle as it flew in and out embroidering together the pretty, lace-like strips from the gourds. What a hunt we had for some wire to run under the edges and to stiffen the tall silk scoop that arched over the front. For it was of the pattern known to us inside the lines but I believe unheard-of in the outer world, as a “sky-scraper.” And what a discussion there was before mother would consent to cut a piece out of the lilac brocade gown — worn by our great-great-grandmother Selden at Governor Claiborne’s Inauguration Ball at New Orleans, in the beginning

of the century — for the strings and the sky-scraper. And how pretty it was when it was finished!

“Did’n’ I tole you dem godes uz gwine ter be powerful handy !” exclaimed Mammy admiringly.

“We knowed our vine was goin’ to bloom bonnets and dish-rags !” chorused the little boys.

But the bonnet was laid on a shelf in the armoire, for something of more importance than the making of a bonnet was to be done that day. Uncle Joshua knew of a man who was about to try to “get through the lines” and mother was going to send a box to father and the boys.

We all flocked out on the back-gallery to help pack it. It was not a very big box, but a great deal somehow went into it. There were socks and shirts for father and brother Tom and brother Hart and cousin Wesley Branscome, and for Dandy and Virgil. There was a dainty little tobacco-pouch for Tom Dennison with cousin Nellie’s initials on it; and some Perique tobacco for father from Uncle Joshua; and a little package of tea and some sure-enough coffee — the last we had; and an uneven-looking and rather soiled “com-

forter" which Mandy and I had taken turns to knit for father; and two fine soft silk handkerchiefs, with a *Toreador* embroidered in the corners, for brothers Tom and Hart. These last were my own and had come in uncle James' blockade-runner from Mexico, and I hesitated and looked at mother when I brought them out. "Yes, dear," she said, "send them if you like. We all want to give to our soldiers the most precious things that we have."

There were other packages too of socks and handkerchiefs and the like, for needy comrades.

I did not wonder now to see mother's tears dropping upon all these things as she folded and laid them in, for I too was beginning to understand.

When the packing was done we followed mother into the rose-garden, leaving Uncle Joshua to nail up and mark the box and smuggle it down to the river where the man would be waiting after dark in his dug-out.

The next Sunday we were all ready for church. The carriage drawn by a pair of rickety old mules

was waiting at the steps with Uncle Joshua on the driver's seat.

Mother had put on her new black-and-white check home-spun dress, with its black velvet collar and buttons and dainty neck-ruffle of fine old yellow lace ; she had drawn on the black silk gloves made of a pair of Grandmother Selden's lavender-scented stockings ; she had a cluster of winter-roses at her belt, and she was waiting for Cousin Nellie to fetch her new dish-rag bonnet from the armoire.

“I clar ter goodness, Mis’ Lucy,” said Mammy who stood in front of her with her hands resting on her ample hips and her turbaned head on one side, “I clar ter goodness, I is done dress’ you fer yo’ firs’ communion ; I is done dress you fer yo’ comin’-out party, an’ I is done dress you fer yo’ weddin’ ; an’ I sholy is never seen you look ez sweet ez you does in dat ar home-spun ! An’ I wishes dat Marse John could see you dis minnit, honey, dat I does !”

A soft little flush passed over mother’s pale face and her lips trembled. But just then Cousin

Nellie came flying in. "Aunt Lucy," she cried breathlessly, "your dish-rag bonnet is *gone!*!"

And sure enough it *was* gone. There was not a sign of it in the armoire, or anywhere. A great hubbub followed the fruitless search. Everybody talked and wondered at once.

It was more exciting even than the advent of the Yankees!

In the midst of the commotion little Percy came strolling in, his hands behind his back and his new jeans hat set firmly on his yellow curls. When he understood what it was all about he stood suddenly still and turned an astonished little face toward mother.

"Why, muzzer," he exclaimed, "I sought you *fordot* it, an' I yunned an' put it in ee *bokt*."

"What box?" asked mother, puzzled.

"Ee solyer's bokt," he replied, spreading out his little hands, and lifting his small shoulders, and rolling up his eyes, like a Diego. "You *said* 'at you wanted ee solyers to have ee mos' *pessus* sings, an' I come'd to get my ginger-b'ead man 'at Mammy made me, an' I saw 'at *pessus* bonnit, an'

I yunned an' 'tuffed ee bonnit an' ee ginger-b'ead man in ee bokt for ee solyers. Was'n nobody *yare*, an' den Unk Josh he come'd an' nailed up ee bokt."

And big tears began rolling down his fat cheeks and dropped like rain upon his new jeans kilt.

But by this time mother was kneeling on the floor beside him with her arms around him laughing and crying in the same breath; and Mammy was hovering over them both laughing and crying too.

"My land!" exclaimed Mandy who was standing by, "dat fool-nigger, Dandy, kin eat de gingerbread man ef it ar hard ez er rock time it gits dar. But what dem soldiers gwine ter do wid Mis' Lucy's dish-rag bonnit!"

But the box never reached them after all! Whether some needier rebels pounced upon it on the way and wore, God bless them! the things intended for our own, or whether indeed it fell into alien hands and never got through the lines at all, we never knew, for we never heard of it afterward.

But even yet we sometimes wonder — can any one tell us? — who got the dish-rag bonnet!

NOTE. — *Luffa acutangula* is the botanical name of the gourd-vine commonly known as “*Torchon*” in French, “Dish-rag” in English. The gourds, which are cucumber-shaped and quite long, must be plucked, for use, before the outer rind has quite hardened; it then peels off like the skin of a banana. Within is a roll of spongy substance of a lovely pale lemon color, containing a number of rows of seed vessels. When this roll is cut open it makes a strip four or five inches wide, the length of the gourd; and the seed-chambers being clipped and the seed taken out a very beautiful surface is presented of alternating smooth and raised bands.

During the war a variety of articles were manufactured from these gourds; the strips were cut and sewed into bonnets, baskets and sometimes fancy aprons bound on the edges with cambric and tied back with colored ribbons. It has always been used in the South by the negroes for dish-rags, hence the common name.

CHAPTER V.

A MORNING-GLORY.

DEY is sholy fightin' up yander somewhurs pas' de ben' o' de river," said Uncle Joshua shaking his head mournfully. " Dat rumberlin' am de canyun-balls bustin' fum de canyuns, an' dat crackerlin' am de shot-guns an' de muskits. Oh, Lord ! what foolishness is done tu'n de hade o' Dy people dat mek 'em lif' up de han' ginse one anoder ter 'stroy de lan', an' ter full up de Valley o' Armyergedjen wid blood eenermos' ter de bridles o' de hosses !— Don't you be skeered, Mis' Lucy, honey," he broke off abruptly, turning his kindly old face toward my mother. " Don't you be skeered ; ain't nobody gwine ter tech er ha'r o' yo' hade whilse yo' Uncle Joshua han' am hot."

A heavy boom like the crash of distant thunder had startled us as we sat at the breakfast-table.

Mother had arisen, trembling, when the sound came again— and again— and finally seemed to be merged into one continuous roar that palpitated along the ground and made the house quiver faintly beneath our feet. She had gone out on the back veranda, leaving the food untouched on her plate ; and there the household was gathered — black and white — listening and looking in strained expectation.

A cold little wind blew in our faces, but the azure January sky laughed cloudless in the yellow sunshine, save where a vaporous ridge of smoke was gradually spreading along the tops of the moss-hung trees in the bend of the river.

As the morning wore away, sharper and shriller sounds smote our ears, coming nearer one while, and then receding like the waves of the sea ; and sometimes we almost thought we heard confused cries and hoarse shouts.

At first there had been a good deal of noise and excitement about the place. The field-hands came hurrying in ; the women ran up and many of them crept under the veranda of the “great-house,”

or huddled in the lower halls ; the men hung, hesitating, around the cabins in the Quarter for a while and then disappeared ; old Aunt Rose came across the back-yard driving the forgotten babies before her like a flock of little brown woolly sheep ; and mounting the steps painfully between Uncle Joshua and Mammy she was placed in mother's own chair in the wide sitting-room, where a cheerful wood-fire blazed, and where the babies toddled about as much at home on the flowered carpet as on the bare floor of Mammy's cabin.

After a while, however, a stillness fell over La Rose Blanche and over the group on the gallery. Even the four little boys sat hand-in-hand in a row together on the top step, silent, and with small sober faces turned in the direction of the unwonted sounds.

But they jumped up and flew to Mammy, hiding their faces in her skirts, as old Jupe, who was lying at their feet, lifted his head suddenly and uttered a long lugubrious howl, and at the same moment a volley of shots rang sharply out at the further edge of the rear cane-fields, followed by a

rushing trampling sound, and another but more irregular volley.

And a confused mass of men came flying across the yellow stubble of the field, striding over the low hedge and leaping the ditch, almost at the very spot where the soldiers had come swarming over last summer. Only, these flying men, who clutched their guns and breathed heavily as they ran, wore gray uniforms. Their faces were grimy with smoke and dust ; and here and there one wore a bloody bandage about his head in lieu of a cap.

Some of them glanced up as they dashed obliquely across the yard, and one, a boyish fellow with dark eyes shining in his swarthy face, even smiled and cheered as he caught sight of mother's down-stretched arms and silent prayerful face. He disappeared with the rest around the corner of the house ; others passed lower down by the stables and swept across the orange-plantation ; others further down still, skirted along the hedge — in all perhaps a couple of hundred men, though they seemed thrice that number.

Sharp shots still echoed behind them, and hardly

had they begun to leap over, or break through the rose-hedges bordering, on either side, the wide lane, when a straggling line of men in blue came panting over the cane-stubble, and striding the low hedge, and leaping the ditch and rushing across the grounds in hot pursuit.

We ran down the long hall and out upon the front veranda, and stood there breathless. It was like a dream, with men as phantoms blown across it! Not a word, or a cry except that one little cheer that broke from the dark-eyed boy as he sped past, had escaped the lips of pursued or pursuer since they came first in sight.

And now, the foremost line—though indeed, neither blue nor grey were formed in lines, but dashed along in irregular and broken squads that were here shoulder to shoulder, and there were wide apart—the grey line was now sweeping across the field beyond the lane; we saw them run up the sloping embankment of the wide ditch that marks the boundary of La Rose Blanche. Their forms stood dark and sharply outlined for a brief second, against the sky; then dropped out of sight.

Their pursuers, hardly equalling them in numbers, followed impetuously ; but stopped suddenly, as a flash of fire ran along the weedy edge of the embankment, a puff of bluish vapor arose, and a rattling volley burst and went echoing by. For a long time—it seems to me as I remember it, though it was in reality perhaps but a few moments—the blue coats held their ground, and the crash of interchanging shots filled the air with confusion.

M'lindy and 'Riah and Sophy fled shrieking into the hall, but I think none of the others stirred—the little boys only shrunk closer to Mammy and Uncle Joshua ; and Mandy and I pressed a little nearer to mother and cousin Nellie, as the bullets came whizzing by. One even struck a post of the veranda just above where cousin Nellie's canary swung in its gilded cage, flattened and fell on the steps. Mammy reached up and unhooked the cage. "*Hit's dade,*" she said with a sob, as she took out the little creature, which had not been struck by the ball, but had perhaps died of fright. The fluffy yellow ball lying motionless in Mammy's

large dusky palm stands out curiously vivid amid the disordered memories of that fearful time.

There was a sudden wavering among the men in blue ; they fell back ; at first step by step, and then more rapidly. Then from behind the embankment the men in grey arose. They appeared once more outlined against the sky, and a yell, hoarse, harsh, terrible, burst from them as they rushed down the slope. A swift light, like a streak of forked lightning, darted along their now almost compact ranks. It was the glinting of the low sun upon their bayonets and upon their polished gun-barrels.

It seemed but a moment before they all panted by again ; the straggling line of blue followed this time by the straggling line of grey, leaping the ditch, striding over the hedge, sweeping across the yellow stubble, and plunging into the wood. An occasional shot came ringing back, and once again the wild yell was borne to us, fainter, but more exultant still ; but soon we heard nothing but the distant boom of the cannon, which itself was coming at longer intervals, and which died away in

silence as the beams of the setting sun turned to a dark yellowish red the low-lying cloud of smoke caught on the tree-tops in the bend of the river.

“ ‘Pears like dey all uz playin’ Deer an’ Dogs,’ ” remarked Mandy. “ An’ hit’s powerful hard ter tell which air de deer an’ which air de dogs ! ”

When we ran again to the back veranda to watch “ the battle ” — as we always called it afterward — roll back into the wood, we found two soldiers seated on the steps. They wore faded grey uniforms and ragged shoes and tattered caps. One of them, an old man with a grey beard, and homely, wrinkled face, was tying a soiled handkerchief about the other one’s arm.

“ Oh, it ain’t nothin’, ma’am,” said the boy, for he was a mere lad, looking up bashfully at mother and cousin Nell, who hovered over him with clean bandages and lint and healing-salve. “ Jest a scratch, ain’t it, Dad? ”

The old man was presently telling mother, while the boy ate a slice of bread and drank some milk, where they came from :

“ ‘Way out yander by the Warloopy River in

Texas. 'The ole woman an' the gals is thar a-makin' of the craps, and an' me an' Jake air a-carryin' on the war!" He laughed gayly and passed an affectionate arm around Jake's thin shoulders. "Come, Jake," he added, rising to his feet, "the boys'll be a hikin' away 'fore we git thar 'f we don't look out. We jest put in fur a little scrimmage, ma'am; the Yanks air a heap too many fer we-uns roun' in these here diggin's."

And they trudged away.

We watched them stepping cheerily across the field, the boy still gathered within the long bony arm. They paused and looked back when they reached the verge of the field, and a moment later they were lost to sight.

It was many a long day before we saw a grey uniform again.

The next morning was quiet enough. The women and boys came creeping back from the swamp to which they had fled at the first crack of the rifles; but the men, except Uncle Joshua, had for the time wholly disappeared.

Old Aunt Rose and the flock of babies remained

in the sitting-room ; and there mother was tending one of Aunt Ca'lline's "triplers" — Marthy, I think it was — who had a fever and sore throat, when Uncle Joshua came in, his face wearing a strange, troubled, frightened look. He stooped over mother where she knelt by the child's pallet, and said something to her in a low voice. A still deeper pallor passed over her pale face. She stood up and motioned to cousin Nellie to take her place, pressing the glass and spoon she held into her hand, and went out without a word.

At the foot of the steps, when she found that Mandy and I and the four little boys had followed her, she turned and opened her lips as if to send us back, but took my hand instead and drew me to her side. Uncle Joshua led us through the orange-plantation. The leafy boughs over our heads, broken by the bullets of the day before, hung down dying and exhaling a sweet musky perfume ; the ground in many places was trampled where the soldiers had passed through and the dry grass was crushed into the brown earth.

We neared the play-house ; and then — I cannot



THE FATHER AND SON FROM THE WARLOOF.

tell why — I suddenly divined what it was that we had come out to see, and I longed to stop, but somehow felt as if I could not.

He was lying there — my Yankee playfellow — close under the shadow of the broken hedge, not far from where I had first seen him. His face, strange and pallid, was upturned to the sky, his eyes were wide open, all their laughing blue faded to a dull opaque grey. One arm was thrown up over his head, and the other lay across his breast, concealing the bullet hole in his jacket, but not the dark red stain which spread along his side and dyed the brown grasses around him. His gun was lying a few feet away where it had fallen from his nerveless hand, whose white fingers were still bent as if to grasp it. A soft dim sunlight — for the sky was clouding — streamed over him and a bird in the wild peach-tree was twittering gently.

My mother sprang forward with an agonized cry — the only one wrung from those brave lips through all the four years of suspense and agony — and threw herself on her knees beside the dead boy, and pressed her lips to his cold forehead.

I stood by quivering, but tearless, while she wiped the ghastly face with her handkerchief, and smoothed back the brown, curling hair, with little inarticulate caressing murmurs; and pressed the white lids over the staring eyes, and sought to compose the stiffened limbs.

But I burst into a passion of weeping when she gently opened the blood-stained jacket and drew from the pocket a packet of letters and that photograph of the sweet-faced mother, with the child that "looked like me" leaning against her knee, which he had shown me so proudly in the play-house that unforgotten summer day.

They laid him, Uncle Joshua and Mammie and mother, upon the linen sheet and wrapped its thick, white, scented folds tenderly about him. And mother sat beside him while Uncle Joshua and Mammy dug the grave. It was sundown before the resting-place was hollowed deep enough, and by that time the sky was thick with clouds, a chill wind had arisen and heavy drops of rain were beginning to fall.

Mandy and I and the little boys had dragged

up long garlands of green from the ruined rose-hedge, and branches from the wild peach-tree; and of these Uncle Joshua made a green couch in the bottom of the grave where the earth was moist and cold; and upon this they laid him, with his gun beside him, and over him again they heaped the glistening green of rose-brier and honeysuckle.

It was quite dark when the earth was rounded up to a mound above him, and Uncle Joshua and Mammy leaned exhausted on their spades. Mother knelt down on the wet ground, her white face shimmering through the darkness, and prayed. Her soft clear voice seemed to fill all the wild night and hush it to repose.

“And to all who loved him, Father be merciful,” she breathed at last. “Bless them and comfort them and give them of Thy peace. And upon us also have mercy.”

“*Amen*,” sobbed Uncle Joshua.

Then Mammy, who was crouched at the foot of the grave with little Percy clasped in one arm and me in the other, began to rock herself slowly from side to side and to wail softly, and presently her

voice arose in a wild strain half-mournful, half-triumphant :

I looks at my han's an' my han's looks new.
 Gwine whar dey ain't no mo' dyin'!
 I looks at my feet all bathe' in dew,
 Gwine whar dey ain't no mo' dyin'!
 Cryin' amen, Good Lord, cryin' amen,
 — Gwine whar dey ain't no mo' dyin' !

She paused abruptly, and when she began again, Percy's shrill little voice joined hers and soared with it out into the ever-gathering darkness :

De angel come an' he shet my eyes,
 Gwine whar dey ain't no mo' dyin'!
 But my Lord he'll open 'em in Pa'adise,
 Gwine whar dey ain't no mo' dyin' !

Mother leaned over and touched her gently on the arm. She arose and swung the child to her shoulder and moved away toward the house, still singing.

The strangely-blended voices floated back to us as we followed silently through the down-pouring rain :

Cryin' amen, Good Lord, cryin' amen,
 Gwine whar dey ain't no mo' dyin'.

A week later, pale and tottering yet from the illness brought on by the excitement and exposure of that terrible day, I came with Mandy out of the house. The storm of wind and rain that had lasted three or four days had been the breaking-up of our short winter.

There were no flowers, but the vines on the trellises were tossing up feathery tufts of young leaves ; the lawn was green and gay under the warm sky ; and as we passed through the orange-grove the little warm wet grasses were soft beneath our feet. In the branches above I thought that I smelted blossoms though we could not find any. The grave had been smoothed, a rough cross placed at the head and a board at the foot. The grass had not yet had time to grow in the beaten space around.

But on the top of the mound itself, nestling close against the brown earth, lo ! a tiny, pale-blue, delicate morning-glory ! Such haste had it been in to bloom, the tender little thing, that it had hardly waited for the vine to put out a leaf, and had spared no time for a curling tendril, but hung there on the end of the single fragile stem, sway-

ing in the light breeze, with the dew upon it and a faint sweet fragrance at its heart.

I stooped and plucked it. "*For little Ally and for his mother,*" I said to myself softly.

And long afterward, the withered morning-glory was laid in the mother's own hand, when she came to us and knelt hand-in-hand with my mother above her boy's sodded grave.

CHAPTER VI.

“ HAREGENAB.”

A STRANGE thing happened one morning at La Rose Blanche — the big plantation-bell did not ring! Such a thing had never been known to happen on a week-day morning!

Before war-times it was the Overseer, who at sunrise ordered Grief, or Jerry to pull the dangling bell-rope; and sat by on his horse with the dogs yelping around, while, at the summons, the field-gang turned out from the Quarter, ready for the day's work. The Overseer had long ago shouldered his gun and marched off to the front. But Uncle Joshua had gone on ringing the bell every morning with his own hands; and then, when all the Quarter was astir, he would lead around the bay mare, Wanka — fleet, beautiful, shining Wanka — for mother to mount, and after-

ward he would pace slowly along by her side as she marshalled the gang; and rode about the plantation, inspecting levees and ditches; superintending the laying of the *mother-cane*, and the “flushing” of the lines, and the hoeing out of weed and grass and tie-vine.

Nor once had the clanging tones of the bell failed to break on the morning air while the stranger tents and the alien flag shone over against the sky by the sugar-house, though through all those idle months the hands responded to its call only by coming to their cabin-doors and peering out, until the clangor ceased, and then, suddenly disappearing from sight again. Its familiar sound added to the general note of activity when the camp was removed and mother and Uncle Joshua resumed their rounds; watching the long battalion of cutters, and following in the wake of cane-piled wagons, that creaked their way toward the factory with its immense smoking chimneys.

(Only now, pretty Wanka was gone, and a gaunt solemn “sugar-mule” bore the light form of the Madame soberly about.)

Even on the day after an outer wave of battle had rolled over the place, leaving its heart-breaking flotsam behind, the sunrise bell sounded — with not a soul to obey its voice — and old Aunt Rose’s brown, woolly flock clapped little gleeful hands as the well-known echoes floated in to them at play around the great-house sitting-room fire.

“Dat ar bell,” Uncle Joshua was wont to observe, “am ez sho’ ez de sun-up, ’cep’n on Sundays; an’ I gwine ter take ter ringin’ hit on Sundays jes fer ter shake up dem lazy niggers. Ki! yi! yi!”

But here was sun-up and long past, of a weekday morning and no bell. And what was more curious still — *no Uncle Joshua!*

“Mis’ Lucy,” said Mammy — and her dark face had a strange ashen hue, and her great, fawn-like eyes were swollen and downcast — “I dunno, honey, what is come o’ Joshua. He is done promis’ Marse John dat he ain’t never gwine ter ’sert you an’ de chillun long’s his hade am ’bove de groun’. But ‘pear lak he is done break his word. Caze he is lef’; an’ wusser’n dat, he is

steal away lak er thieft in de middle o' de night. An' de ole dog Jupe a-howellin' down by de cabin do', lak ez ef he know'd we is all disgrace'." Her breast heaved and a dry sob swelled her throat.

"Spec Daddy done 'sert Mis' Lucy an' de chillun an' jinded de Yankees up yander pas' de ben' o' de river, lak some o' de res' o' dem sassy niggers," remarked Mandy.

Mother laid a soft, white reassuring hand upon Mammy's fat shoulder.

"I have no idea where Uncle Joshua has gone, Mammy," she said; "but wherever he is, he is faithful to his trust, I know."

"De Lord bless yer, honey! I knowed dat you wa'nt gwine ter 'pute no harm ter Joshua," Mammy cried, the tears gushing all at once from her eyes. "Yer good-fer-nothin' *frizzle*," she went on, whirling wrathfully around upon Mandy, "ain't yer shame' o' yo'se'f ter been a-black-bikin' o' yo' own Daddy ter Mis' Lucy an' de chillun!"

Mandy dodged the threatened blow and ran down the steps to hold the bridle of the mule while mother climbed upon his back.

“Miss Ma'y,” she said solemnly, as mother rode off to the farther field with Mammy walking by her side, “’f Daddy ain’t jinded de Yankees, den I knows what is come o’ him—*Ha’yg’nab done cotch him!*”

How we all missed him, to be sure! And how “obstropolous,” as Mammy declared, everything on the place — from the mules in the stables to the hoe-gang in the cane-rows — seemed to become “de minit Joshua’s back am fair’ tu’n’d, an’ Mis’ Lucy’s right han’ am tucken away.”

Some days later there was another happening. Father Kenyon suddenly appeared — coming slowly up the magnolia avenue from the front-gate, with his hands clasped behind his back and his merry brown eyes blinking at the sun — just as he used always to come after early mass at our little church, to smoke a pipe and play a game of chess with father. His long black frock was rusty and threadbare, and dull stains that might once have been warm and bright and red, flecked it here and there, and discolored the cuffs of the sleeves. For he had been following the army about for two

years, away over yonder, where the noise of battle was loudest, and where the warm, bright, red blood gushed most freely, as he passed from field to field, ministering alike to friend and foe.

But his smooth round face was the same — jolly and beaming! as we ran pell-mell to meet him, with joyful cries. And it beamed more brightly still when he thrust his hand into his bosom and drew out a package of letters.

The great river, guarded by sharp-shooters on the banks, and by mysterious-looking gun-boats that surged up and down on its yellow breast, and sometimes belched forth fire and thunder at foes whom we could not divine, now cut the Confederacy in twain, and it had been months since a letter had found its way across from that far-away “front” where our hearts were.

These were from the boys, written upon scraps of coarse brown paper, and telling briefly — brave young souls — of weary marches, and fierce engagements, and scanty rations ; and dwelling gayly on the little homely incidents of camp-life.

“Wes and Dandy had the measles,” concluded

brother Tom's letter, “but they are out of hospital now, and Hart's arm is nearly well. And Virgil has just come into camp with a fine fat pig and some collards (*I don't know where he could have got them*). But our mess is going to give a party tonight, you bet !”

In brother Hart's letter there was a line for me. Dear! dear! I came upon it just the other day, a torn and crumpled scrap, wrapped around an old war-time “huswife.” My heart swelled, and more than twenty years seemed to melt away as I unfolded it. And a vision of the curly-haired boy who wrote it, and of another curly-haired lad who longed for one more chance to “be good to little Ally” rose before me as I traced the lines through tears.

“*Dere* little Sis,” it said (he never could spell my brother Hart!), “I used to *teeze* you and make you cry when I was at home. I am now *verry* sorry. When I come home (if I ever *doo*) I will never *teeze* you again.”

Father's regiment had been transferred to another command, and so there was no letter from

him, but news of him had reached the camp just before Father Kenyon left. He was well and in good spirits. He had been promoted. And he was as sure as ever that The Cause would triumph in the end.

“Now, aunt Lucy,” said cousin Nellie when Father Kenyon had had his breakfast and finished the story of his long, roundabout journey North and West and finally South, with the contraband letters concealed in his bosom, “now, aunt Lucy, Father Kenyon has come home, and we have letters from all the boys, and good news from uncle John, and it is your wedding-day beside. I am going to put La Rose Blanche *en fête* once more just to show how glad I am !”

Mother shook her head doubtfully, but she smiled at the same time, and her eyes gave assent.

“Suppose the blue-coats do come around,” continued cousin Nell, drawing on her gloves and picking up the garden-shears. “They can’t do much, I reckon, with a parcel of women and old men and children. Besides I rather like ‘em, and

anyway I’m not a bit afraid of ‘em ;” and she ran gayly down the steps.

We were presently hanging rose-wreaths on the old-fashioned crystal-drop chandeliers, and twining rose-garlands over the pictures ; and cramming roses into bowls and jars and vases. M’lindy brought in the mops and brushes to give an extra polish to the waxed floors ; and ’Riah and Sophy set to work in the dining-room, rubbing the silver, brought out from its hiding-place, known only to mother, now that Uncle Joshua was gone.

Mother herself took down and wiped the company-china. Mammy, with the little boys tagging at her heels, bustled about the kitchen whence the smell of molasses-pie and Beauregard cup-cake, and gun-boat custard, and other war-time dainties, soon came floating over to the great-house. “ My lan’, but don’t dat mek a-body hongry ! ” exclaimed Mandy.

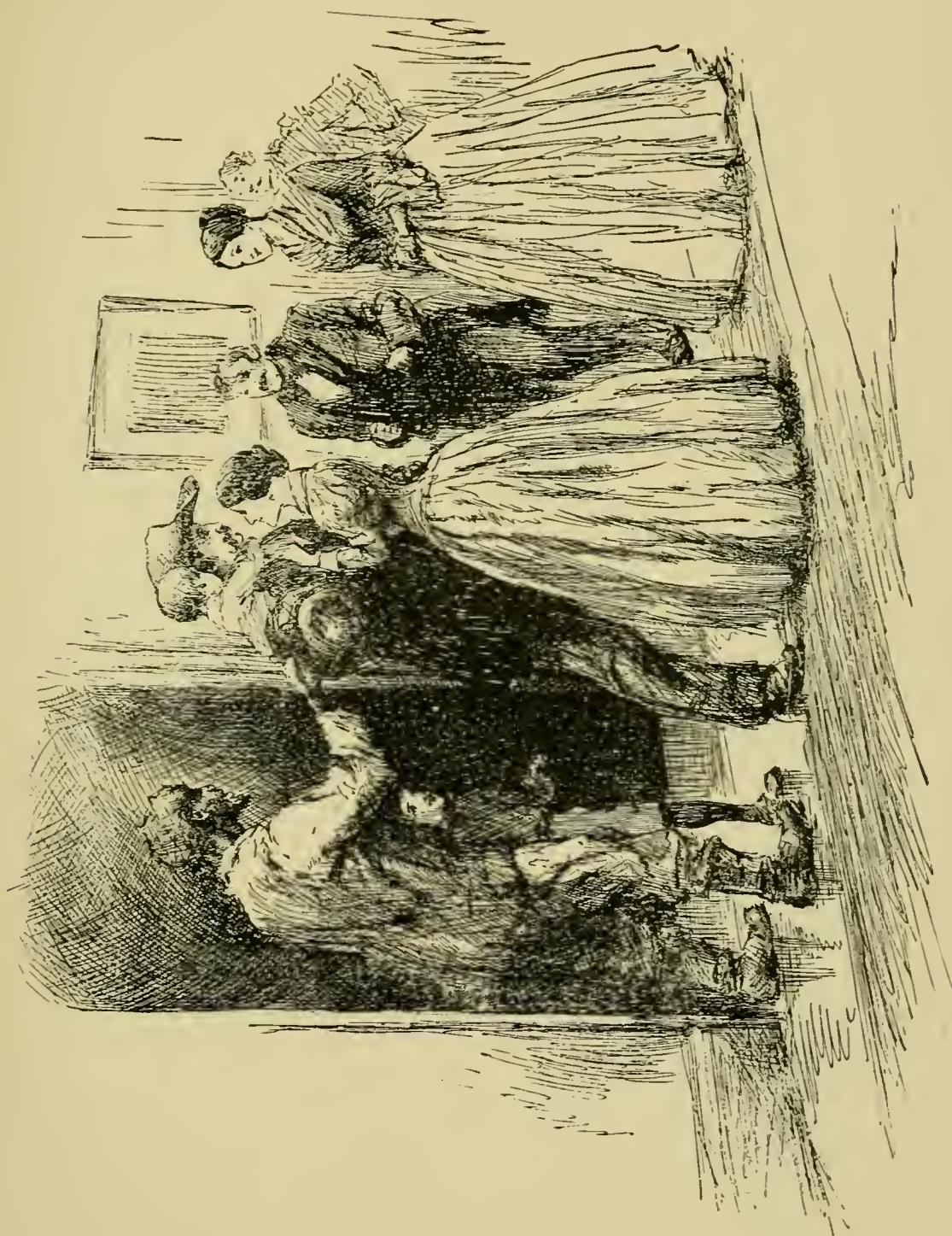
Jerry and Grief and Jake rode off in different directions with little notes and messages, and just before night Grandpa Selden’s carriage rolled up the drive and Uncle Silas descended from the

driver's seat to throw open the door and let down the steps. Grandpa himself got out, fussy, and scolding in his high cheery voice, his wooden leg grinding on the shell-walk and his snuff-box and spectacles tumbling out of his pocket as usual.

A little later uncle James' five girls came in a lumbering plantation-cart driven by Uncle Jed, their old carriage-driver, who thought the dignity of the family compromised by such a turnout, and bore himself very stiffly while he helped his young ladies to the ground.

And Madame Brion, who had come back to Bon Soldat, walked over with Odille and Angelique, all three looking strangely pale and sad in their rusty mourning.

And by the time grandpa's old chum and comrade, Major Brentling, had arrived with Madame Michel and Mademoiselle Celeste, her grand-daughter, Uncle Silas, in Uncle Joshua's blue cut-away coat with brass buttons, was gliding noiselessly about lighting the candles. Their mellow radiance streamed through the long open windows into the soft starlight outside. The waxed floors gleamed



THE NEXT MOMENT SHE WAS CLASPED IN FATHER'S ARMS.

like polished mirrors. The tall blue Chinese spice-jars on each side of the wide fireplace were uncovered, and a musky fragrance of dried rose-leaves and oriental drugs floated from them and mingled with the perfume of freshly-gathered roses and star-like cape-jessamines. A faint breeze came whispering through the curtains to stir the little yellow flames of the candles.

Mother, clad in the white gown she always wore on her wedding anniversary, moved softly about, welcoming her guests, and then went over in the corner by Madame Brion and the two mothers of soldier boys sat there clasping hands and speaking in low tones ; and looking at each other with sad, tender eyes.

Grandpa in his own big arm-chair by a window was telling Father Kenyon for the hundredth time about Monterey and the queer sensation he had on the battle-field when he tried to rise and walk after the shell that stunned him had whizzed by. “My leg was gone, sir, clean gone if you’ll believe me, and I didn’t even know it ! And Max here, not a dozen paces away with his arm smashed to smith-

ereens! Eh, those were fine days, Max, old fellow!" and he gave Major Brentling a hearty slap on the shoulder.

Charley and Sam leaned against his knee and listened with shining eyes and flushed faces. But Will and little Percy were rolling about on the lawn in the patches of light that streamed from the windows over the flower-dotted grass.

Odille and Angelique and I sat on the steps of the veranda listening spell-bound to Mandy's story of "Harégénab and Shadder." It was not the first time we had heard it. In fact we knew every word of it by heart, but we were always delighted to quake and thrill anew over its vague horrors.

"Well, chillun," Mandy went on, "Ha'yg'nab live in er house down by de aidge o' de swamp; er house whar got er i'on do', an' er key big ez er gate-pos'. He air er gi-yunt like dem whar Marse Tom use ter read 'bout, an' he ar ez high ez er sugar-house chimbly. His jaws is white ez er pil-ler-case an' his eyes is red ez fire. His arms is long's Aunt Judy's cloze-pole; an' he got er mouf

sump'n lak er wash'-pot. Shadder ar his brudder an' jis 'pintedly lak him 'cep'n Shadder *black*.

“ Ha'yg'nab got er way er gittin' up frum de bed made out'n red-hot coals, an' stretchin' hissef an' say'n, low-lak an' sof', ‘Shadder, Ise gittin' er little hongry. Hit's time *somebody* wuz brung in.’ Den dey start out bofe tergedder. Ha'yg'nab steppin' slow-lak an' powerful easy, an' Shadder steppin' slow-lak an' powerful easy clos't terhine him. Dey creep — an' *creep* — an' *c-r-e-e-p*” —

“ O Mandy ! ”

“ — Creep — an' *creep* an' *c-r-e-e-p* untwell dey see somebody. Mayby hit's grown-folks lak Daddy, but mos' all de time hit's chillun, caze Ha'yg'nab love dey bones de bes'; but when he gets right hongry, he don't keer much. Den dey stop an' Ha'yg'nab reach out his long arm an' *grab* de chile ” —

Here Mandy seized Odille by the shoulders and we all huddled together in a spasm of terror and delight.

— “ *Grab* de chile (caze hit's mos' in gin'ral a chile) an' jerk him onto his shoulder an' *creep* off.

Den Shadder stretch out *his* long arm an' grab 'nother chile, an' den" —

Mandy stopped abruptly. She sat on the step above us, her face turned toward the lawn. We could see her eyes slowly dilate in the dim light. We turned wonderingly to follow her fascinated gaze.

A tall figure, gigantic in the uncertain starshine, had come out of the shadows of the magnolia-trees, and was advancing across the lawn toward the little boys, who were bobbing and tumbling gleefully about. When it reached them it paused, stooped, and put out a long arm. A white hand gleamed for a second in the yellow patch of light; and the next moment little Percy was swung upward, his shrieks stifled against a white dimly-seen face. At the same moment a second figure darted forward; long black arms reached out and closed upon Will; we heard confused cries and hurried footsteps that crunched upon the shelled walk as we ourselves burst into wild screams and fled into the house, stumbling blindly over each other.

“What is it?” exclaimed mother running across the room to meet us.

“O mother, mother, Harégénab and Shadder! Harégénab and Shadder!” I sobbed, hiding my face in her skirts.

“What do you mean!” said grandpa, seizing me by the arms and shaking me vigorously.

“Oh, they’ve got the little boys! They’ve got the little bo—” There was a sudden confusion at the door. Mother looked up. A great wave of joy swept over her face and lighted her eyes. And the next moment she was clasped with little Percy in father’s arms.

“I done brung him ter yer, Mis’ Lucy, honey,” said Uncle Joshua, swinging Will down from his shoulder, and taking off his battered old hat. “I is done got word dat Marse John uz on de yuther side o’ de ribber, whar he is come ter fotch some ’spatches ter de Gin’l. Dat huccome I done steal off in de middle o’ de night ’dout tellin’ de old woman. I skeered lessen she mout *tell*.” (Mammy gave a kind of a grunt that did not at all disturb the grin of delight overspreading her broad face.)

“I pull over in er dug-out. An’ I uz powerful skeered lessen some o’ dem fool sharp-shooterers uz gwine ter kill me, an’ den Mis’ Lucy wa’nt never gwine ter know huccome I ter sneak off in de middle o’ de night, caze you knows, Mis’ Lucy, dat I is done promis’ Marse John dat I ain’t never gwine ter ‘sert you an’ de chillun — an’ I *ain’t*. Den I foun’ Marse John. My! but I uz glad ter see Marse John once mo’. An’ he ‘low as how he ca’ynt spar much time but he ‘boun ter spen’ de weddin’-day long o’ Mis’ Lucy an’ de chillun. An’ he tuck’n tuck off de gray nuniform wid de brass buttons an’ de gole stars on de collar, an’ put on dem homespun cloze whar he’s got on now; an’ den Marse John an’ me, we lay roun’ dar mos’ four days waitin’ fer er chance ter cross de ribber. Dat huccome we ain’t got home no sooner.”

By this time everybody had shaken hands with Uncle Joshua and he backed into a corner, his old face shining with satisfaction.

As for father he looked bigger and browner than ever standing with his arm about mother, trying to answer a dozen questions at once.

Pretty soon the news somehow got down to the Quarter, and the hall began to swarm with the familiar, eager, dusky faces — for only a few had failed to come back after the last scattering. Father shook hands all around and made them a hearty speech which set their dark eyes to rolling and dancing and their white teeth a-gleaming.

Then the younger ones returned to the Quarter and a few of the older ones were posted about the place to keep watch. For sometimes, though not often, a squad of blue-coats would appear suddenly, and finding everything tranquil, as suddenly disappear.

It was after twelve o'clock when we came out of the dining-room, and Major Brentling and Father Kenyon went away. The others all slept at La Rose Blanche. I tried hard to keep awake while the good-nights and good-bys were being said. Grandpa was the last to go, and he loomed up large as Mandy's “gi-yunt” before my sleepy eyes as he kissed father on both cheeks and stumped off up-stairs. And then I dimly saw for a moment the shadowy room and the two figures arm-in-arm

walking up and down and talking in low tones, my mother's white garments fluttering in the chill night breeze that poured in at the window. And then, all at once they too faded away.

When I awoke a gray misty light was creeping into the bedroom. Mother was standing by an open window, still dressed in her white gown, with a bunch of drooping roses at her belt, and a withered jessamine in her down-falling hair. Her hands were clasped and she was gazing out toward the river which was full now and gleamed level with the top of the sodded levee.

"Was father here? Where is father?" I asked.

She turned a strained anxious face upon me, as if she only half understood and then looked out again toward the river.

I knew without further questioning that father had gone back to "the front."

That was Sunday. Monday morning the joyous clamor of the bell roused the Quarter once more, and Uncle Joshua presently came around the corner of the house leading the sugar-mule.

"I done fotch Marse John ter de yuther side all

right, Mis' Lucy,” he said as he lifted her into the saddle and moved off by her side. “An’ de las’ word he ax me war ter be sho’ an’ not ’sert you an’ de chillun an’ I ain’t gwine ter ’sert you an’ de chillun long’s my hade am ’bove de groun’.”

“I don’t keer what dey say,” said Mandy, looking after them, from the top step, “Miss Ma’y, if daddy don’t quit foolin’ roun’ dem gum-boats an’ dem sharp-shoopers Ha’yg’nab gwine ter catch him *sho’*.”

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW DOG.

EVERY day it crept nearer to the top of the levee—the big, tawny River. Until, one morning, it glinted and gleamed under the June sky, level with the high crest; and when a light breeze blew across its foamy surface, little waves came washing over and trickled down the long grass-grown slope into the dusty road that ran alongside.

The cane-crop of La Rose Blanche was “laid by.” Over the quiet fields stretched an unbroken sweep of beryl-green, where sunshine and shadow chased each other, and whence, at intervals, arose little rhythmic murmurs, as if the Small People were at play in the cool dim underworld beneath.

In the cornfields rank upon rank of bronze tassels were jauntily tossing, and within the shelter

of broad rustling blades below, nestled the tender milky roasting-ears, with shreds of yellow silk escaping from their soft enfolding sheaths.

In the cotton-patch, where the hoes were still busy, the rich, brown earth showed between rows of dark velvety green; and, of mornings, spots of vivid color glowed where blue and crimson morning-glories trailed their tangled vines.

The rose-hedges were white with long waxen buds, and wide-open, large-leaved blossoms with yellow hearts that quivered in the sun. The lawn was sweet with the musky perfume of sensitive-plants, whose fluffy balls were half-hidden in the rank growth of unshaven grass. And from the rose-garden every afternoon mother brought a great shallow basket piled high with rose-petals to add to the heap already drying in a shady corner of the veranda for the spice-jars.

The Jack-beans clambering over the cabins down at the Quarter, swung their long purple clusters of bloom lazily in the air; and the gourd-vines flashed their yellow trumpets.

The bananas, whose tattered leaves were never

silent, were beginning to put out long crooked arms with bunches of paly-pink, down-drooping flowers at the ends. The orange trees were hung thick with tiny green globes.

“How pretty it all looks, Uncle Joshua!” said mother.

“Hit sholy do,” responded Uncle Joshua, letting his gaze wander slowly from field to field out to the dark moss-hung swamp, and back again, by hedge, and patch, and rose-garden. “Hit am een-ermos’ ez clar-shinin’ ez P’yardise! But den, Mis’ Lucy honey, dars dat bondacious River! She sholy am on er boom. An’ she *kin’* ’stroy all we-all’s ’sumption ’d’out humpin’ herse’f *ef* she tek hit in her hade ter come rampagin’ thoo dat weak place in de levee! De good Lord sen’ hit don’t rain,” he concluded despondently as he went off to have more earth shoveled against the weak place in the levee.

Grandma Selden (Mère we always called her) who had come up from River-View on her annual visit, said in her soft pretty French — for Mère had never learned to speak English, and was deaf

to us all, even to Grandpa, unless we addressed her in her own tongue — Mère said that La Rose Blanche looked just as it did when she was a little girl. She was born at La Rose Blanche, and grew up there and was married there to Grandpa, who then could not speak a word of French, but who managed somehow, being young and brave and handsome, to woo and win her.

Old Justine, who stood behind her Mistress' chair, tossed her head and said (her *patois* was as musical as Mère's French) that for her part she thought it was much prettier when Madame was a girl, and Madame's father was alive, and before *ces Americains* got their hands on it.

By this she meant our La Rose Blanche negroes, who came into the family with Grandpa and with father.

Mammy, behind mother's chair, tossed *her* head and said that “we-all's fambly am one o' de bes' famblys in ole Virginny, an' ain't gwine *no* French nigger had de *insu'ance* to run hit down whar I is!”

Then everybody laughed, for such spats were common between the two, and Mammy and Justine

went amicably off together to make *gumbo zherbes** for dinner.

That very day the rain begun to fall—not hard at first, but in a gentle drizzle, through which all green things looked greener still. But at dark the sky became heavy with ominous clouds crossed and re-crossed incessantly by white blinding streaks of lightning; and sharp thunder-claps from time to time burst upon the sultry, breathless air.

Lights were twinkling down by the River, where guards paced to and fro, keeping watch over the levee—that precious rampart which alone stretched between utter destruction and the unconscious teeming fields below. In front of Bon Soldat a huge fire was blazing, and further down we could see, red against the stormy sky, the smoke of another that we knew must mark the upper boundary of River-View.

Suddenly the wind arose, bringing with it a strange sound, deep, hoarse continuous, like the prolonged roar of a wild beast. The quick rush

* “Gombo Zherbes” (*gumbo aux herbes*), gombo with the ordinary foundation and with beet-tops, lettuce, celery-tops, mustard-greens, etc., added and boiled to rags.

of down-falling rain drowned it for a breath, but through a momentary lull it broke again, hollow, menacing, terrible.

It was the voice of the River—the growl of the wild beast preparing to spring upon its prey!

The lights on the levee hurried wildly about, and presently gathered like a swarm of gigantic fire-flies about that fatal “weak place,” over against the orange-plantation, and where the bank made a little curve inward.

Then hasty footsteps went splashing by under the window. A cry rung sharply out; and the fierce clangor of the plantation-bell smote into the fury of the storm.

We knew what that meant! The weak place had given way! A *crevasse* had broken through the levee!

The bell of our little church at the landing replied almost instantly—in softer and mellower tones; and soon, like a far-away echo, came the response of the Bon Soldat bell.

The Quarter sprung into life; torches flared from one cabin to another; squads of men tramped

across the yard laughing, grumbling, singing, hallooing. Then, through the sweep of the rain, and above the roar of the River, we heard the cracking of whips down the levee-road; and the loud outcry of teamsters urging their mules to a run; and the creaking of wheels, as heavily-loaded wagons came lumbering up from the neighboring plantations. A little later and a dozen voices began to shout out hoarse commands to an ever-increasing, yelling, distracted crowd.

For hours with our faces pressed against the window-panes, we children watched the flames of the great bonfires flaring and leaping in the wind, and listened to the sounds that came, now confused and indistinct, now loud and clear, through the sudden hushes of the storm.

“Dat River ar mighty vir’grous, sho’s you bawn,” said Mandy at last. “An’ she ain’t gwine ter do nothin’ but laugh terhine de backs at all dem white-folks and niggers makin’ lak dey kin keep her out’n anywhurs whar she tek er notion ter git.”

Meanwhile Mammy had made her way to the

kitchen, with Aunt Hester the cook and half-a-dozen of the women, and there they were baking corn-pone, and frying bacon, and boiling huge pots of parched-potato and parched-molasses coffee. Mother and Mère and cousin Nellie were in the dining-room packing hampers. And all night long Grief and Jake and Jerry were kept busy carrying food and drink out to the exhausted workers.

The next morning the rain had ceased, but the sky was grey and lowering, and rough gusts of wind still blew out of the east.

The little boys stayed with Mère, but I went with mother; Uncle Joshua led the sugar mule around and lifted her into the saddle. I was perched behind her with my arms clasped tightly around her waist.

A thick yellow stream of water was forcing itself sullenly along the lane toward the swamp; as we approached the River it grew suddenly deeper and mounted almost to the axles of the wagons grouped in a corner of the field. The mules fastened to the troughs behind, stood in it up to their knees, placidly munching away at the wisps of hay that

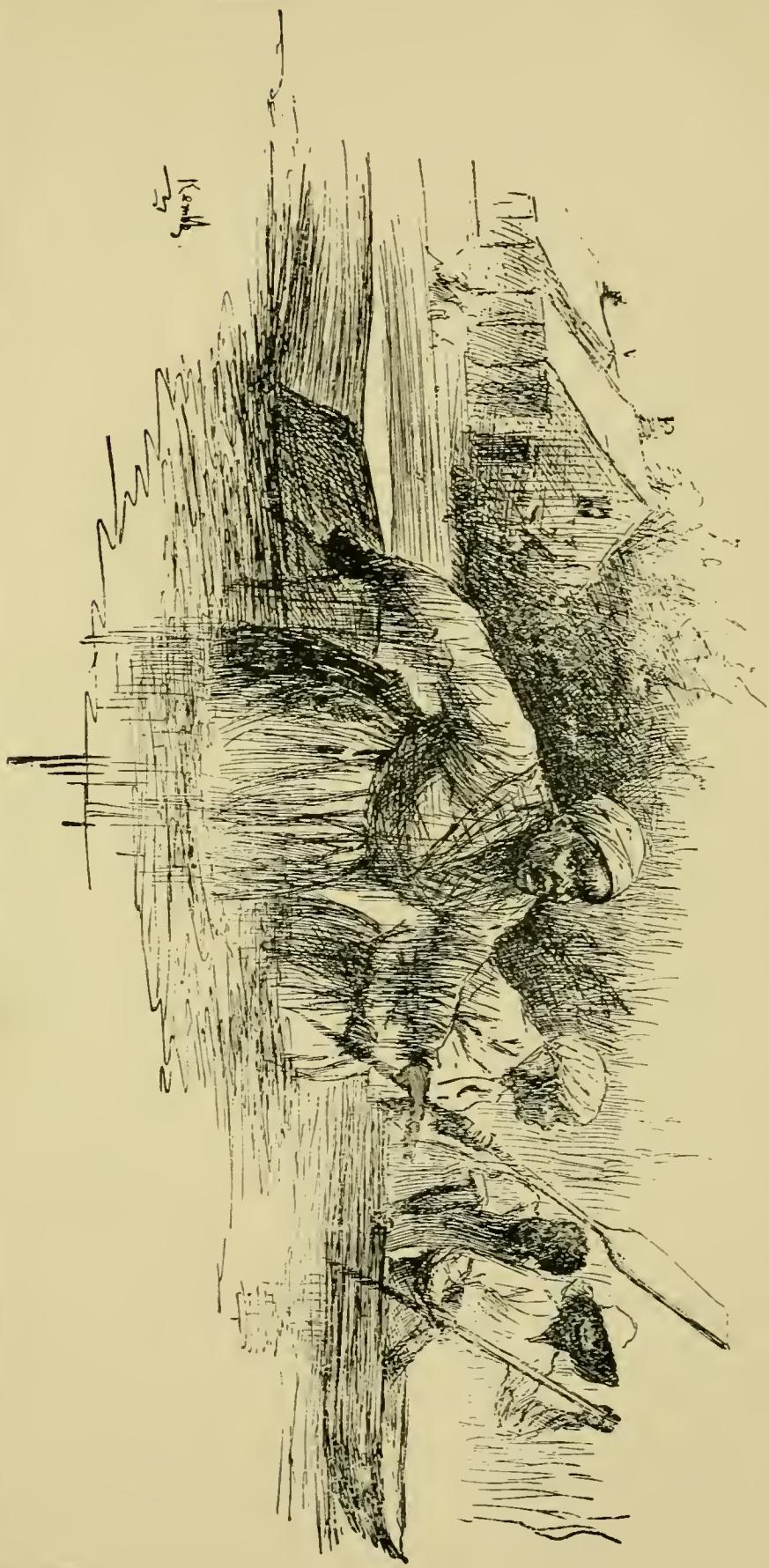
came floating by from the stacks waiting their turn to be packed into the barricade.

A few hundred yards to the left the army of men were at work, wheeling barrow-loads of earth from the back-fields ; filling earth-bags ; splashing through water waist-deep about the partly-closed *crevasse*, driving piles, laying timbers, heaping straw, brushwood, earth — what-not ! against the growing rampart.

There were the Bon Soldat negroes and those of River-View and Ridgefield ; and many familiar faces, black and white, from round about the Parish ; and working away with a will, like the rest, were a dozen or more of Yankee soldiers from the camp above the bend.

Grandpa Selden was standing on the slippery crest of the levee shouting directions to the men below ; and Major Brentling with his one arm was helping to drag a heavy beam up the wet slope.

The men all stopped work for a minute as mother came riding up, and burst into a ringing cheer. Their voices sounded far-away and faint in my ears ; everything swam before my eyes and



HESTER AND MAMMY, DRAGGING THEIR OVERTURNED BOAT AFTER THEM.

I grew sick and dizzy. Uncle Joshua reached up and took me in his arms.

“No wonder de chile am skeered,” he said.
“Hit am er tarryfyin’ sight to be sho’.”

The vast, foaming, tawny sea roared by far above our heads, swirling against the half-finished barrier, and here and there breaking through ; it dashed in angry waves over the long line of solid embankment and poured down the sloping sides to mingle with the muddy flood that filled the road and was already encroaching upon the fields.

The unconscious fields were laughing back at the blue sky, beginning to smile through the parting clouds !

Suddenly a warning-shout rung from the top of the levee. An enormous tree-trunk with jagged ends where wide-spreading limbs had been, came plunging against the barricade ; it struck the pil-
ing with a dull boom, recoiled, rose almost erect in the air, balancing itself and churning the water frantically for a second, and plunged forward again.

A cry of rage and despair burst from four or

five hundred throats as the piling gave way, the earth-bags melted, and the torrent came leaping, seething, hissing through. Some of the men were beaten to the ground by the force of the sudden rush.

“What will they do now?” I asked when Uncle Joshua had turned back toward the house with me.

“Dey’ll jes’ go at her ag’in, chile, an’ she ain’t gwine ter let ’em git de bes’ o’ her long’s she kin he’p it. She am got er powerful heap o’ ebo in her—dat River am!”

This was indeed but the beginning. Day after day the fight went on with pretty much the same result. Sometimes Grandpa would come stumping in and announce with a sigh of satisfaction that the *crevasse* was closed at last. The wet and wearied men would go home to their well-earned rest, leaving the patrol alone on his beat. The scantily-stocked store-room of La Rose Blanche would be shut; the ordinary routine of the household would be resumed—and, a few hours later, the bell would clang out its imperious summons, and the conflict would begin anew.

In the meantime, the in-pouring torrent — at first taken off to the swamp by the draining ditches — was slowly but steadily overflowing their banks. Inch by inch it crawled through the orange-plantation, along the lane, up the fields, into the grounds — until by the time the *crevasse* was really closed, it spread an unbroken lake, over La Rose Blanche, across Bon Soldat, and beat against the steps of the River-View great-house miles away down the river.

Only the rear-cane-fields somehow escaped and stood high and dry above the water, and here, in a snug corner, the mules and cattle were housed.

At first the waves, that lapped softly against the basement windows and rippled away over the lawn and sparkled in the hot sunlight, were thick and muddy. But gradually they became clear; then as if in a vast mirror, we could see the soft grass, and the little hedges and rose-bushes and the violet-beds, emerald-green, waving back and forth with a gentle undulatory motion far below the wind-stirred surface. The partly-submerged rose-hedges bloomed defiantly, their glossy leaves

and waxen buds reflected in the clear pool below; the tall cane standing deep in the flood rustled its plumpy tufts gayly.

But, after awhile, a sickly yellow began to steal over the fields; the hedges strewed the waves with white unopened buds; a thick scum overspread the water and a damp, clinging, curious odor pervaded the air.

We seemed to be living in a strange, new world. Sometimes a fish leaped up near a trellis showing his white glistening sides as he fell back with a splash. Then the little boys would rush headlong into the house for their poles and lines, and they would hang for hours over the banisters waiting for a nibble. Long, slimy, greenish snakes would coil themselves on the steps to bask in the sunshine, and hardly take the trouble to slide off when anybody came down to the boats moored against the pillars with their paddles laid across. Once, a monstrous alligator glided across the lawn, swimming, his rusty nose in the air, and dived under the rose-garden gate. Ten minutes later a baby-one, three or four feet long, came crawling

up the steps, making a funny little puffing noise as he came, and when he reached the veranda he stretched himself out with a grunt and lay there lazily opening and shutting his small eyes.

Boats were darting about all day long from one part of the plantation to another. Uncle Joshua every morning piloted out a fleet of little pirogues to some point where work could yet be done. Hester and Mammy went and came from the Quarter, paddling themselves awkwardly, while Jake and Grief in their light dug-outs danced jeering and chaffing around them. Often a yell of derisive laughter would bring us to the back gallery, and there would come the two dear old souls, dripping, muddy, and scolding; dragging their overturned boat after them, and threatening with uplifted oars the saucy youngsters.

Every day mother, in the "ladies-boat," pulled by Jerry, went to our little church at the landing, taking one or more of us children with her; sometimes she made a visit to Madame Brion at Bon Soldat; or even ventured as far as River-View to

fetch back something for Mère, who never trusted herself in a boat.

One night, the fleet of pirogues came sweeping along the lane between the high rose-hedges; the men were singing, keeping time to the splash of their paddles. They turned, one after another, into the wide gateway, their rich mellow voices floating across to us where we sat in the starlight on the veranda :

White folks say de nigger won't steal,
But I catch six in my corn-fiel'.

Run, nigger, run, patterroler catch you;
Run, nigger, run, hit's almos' day.

As they bore away toward the Quarter, a boat detached itself from the dark mass and shot noiselessly over the lawn to the house. It was the "ladies-boat" which had been to carry cousin Nellie to Bon Soldat for the night.

As Jerry drew up alongside the steps and rested on his oars, a large dog rose in the hinder part of the boat and leaped out. He stood a moment, as if hesitating, on the lower step, and then bounded swiftly up and disappeared into the hall.

“Re’kin dat Madame Brion Cæsar-dog,” said Jerry, when he had steadied the wobbling boat. “I didn’ know he dar. I dunno huccome he ter sneak home long o’ me dat er way.”

The next morning the little boys came down from their play-room under the roof in a high state of excitement.

“We’ve got a new dog,” said Sam, “an’ ‘tain’t Madame Brion’s Cæsar-dog neither.”

“Such a nice dog,” added Will.

“’Cause he yets us p’ay wiz him,” explained little Percy. And they hurried away with a plateful of bread for their new playmate.

The new dog was really a comfort, mother said. Her mind had not been so easy about the boys since the flood came with its snakes and alligators, and perhaps other and undreamed-of dangers. They were at least safe, up in the garret with a good-natured dog.

They trotted off every morning as soon as they had finished their breakfast, with an ample supply for Mont’rey — his name was “Mont’rey,” they said, “after Grandpa’s leg” — and shouts of glee-

ful laughter and joyous cries would presently come ringing down the stairs.

One day they took old Jupe up to the play-room to introduce him to the new dog. But Jupe evidently did not find the new dog to his liking, for we heard him utter a wild yell, and directly he came tearing down the stairs, with his tail between his legs and the skin fairly quivering on his lean body. He plunged into the water and made for Mammy's cabin ; and no threats or coaxing could thereafter induce him to enter the great-house.

One afternoon when the glee overhead was louder even than usual, Mère, who had a headache, said to mother : "Lucille, I wish you would go up and tell the little boys, *and* the new dog, to be just a little more quiet."

When mother reached the head of the second stairway, she opened the door of the play-room and looked in.

They were playing "soldier." Little Percy marched at the head of the line, beating lustily upon an old tin bucket ; Will followed, with his lath sword held stiffly against his breast ; Charley

and Sam trod hard upon his heels, their stick-guns on their shoulders and their canteens swinging at their sides. And the new dog, with Percy's straw hat stuck on the back of his head, brought up the rear, walking on his hind legs.

Mother turned pale at sight of him, and almost swooned. The new dog was a big shaggy, half-grown black bear!

He had been driven in by the overflow and tamed by the innocent confidence of his little hosts!

He dropped on all-fours and growled when mother came in, but seeing that his comrades marched away undisturbed, he cocked his head a little on one side and stood up again; and there they went, around and around, the tin drum rattling, the small Captain gravely marking time, the "comp'ny" keeping step.

"*Boom!*!" said an imaginary cannon. Charley and Sam fell down groaning. The bear stood still and looked at them. But Captain Will gave him a smart slap with his lath sword, and down he tumbled in a heap with the others.

“Isn’t he a good doggie, mother?” asked Charley when they had all scrambled to their feet.

Mother said yes, though her knees trembled.

“We’ve put another name to him,” Sam said. “We call him ‘Mont’rey’ after Grandpa’s leg, and ‘Bull Run’ after Captain Brion’s battle.”

After that Mont’rey-Bull-Run was brought downstairs and became one of the family. His antics kept the whole house in an uproar; even Mère, who was afraid of him, could not help laughing at him.

The water by this time was beginning to drain slowly away from the plantation; the tops of the little hedges showed first, and then the leaves of the violet-beds and finally the yellowed grass.

One morning when Mammy opened the dining-room door she uttered a cry of dismay. The floor was strewn with broken dishes, chairs and tables were overturned, the doors of the side-board were swung open, the lower panes of the long windows were smashed. In the midst of this chaos sat Mont’rey-Bull-Run digging his paws into a broken honey-jar clasped in his arm, and licking them



IN THE MIDST OF THE CHAOS, SAT MON' REY-BULL-RUN.

with little snorts of delight. Mammy pounced upon him with her broom.

“He look at me er minit, mournful-lak,” she said afterward. “An’ den he sot down de jar an’ tromp straight out in de hall ter de hat-rack, an’ tek de baby’s (Percy’s) li’l straw hat in he mouf an’ march off powerful ‘fended-lak down de step — an’ I ain’t seed him no mo’, caze I ha’ ter mek dem triflin’ no-’count house-gals wipe up the flo’ un’ tote out de smash-up chiny.”

We never saw Mont’rey-Bull-Run again.

The little boys were inconsolable.

“He we-ent away,” sobbed Will, “’cause Mammy sc-o-lded him, an’ hu-r-ted his feelin’s. We lo-ved him better’n anything. An’ when we git to be men, we’re goin’ do-own to the swamp an’ ‘vite him to come home ag’in’. He’ll come, won’t he, mother?”

“Cose he will,” cried little Percy, smiling through his tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

POOR WHITEY.

POOR Whitey was never allowed in the grown-folks' parlors on grand occasions, when the tall silver candlesticks on each end of the mantel, and the crystal-drop chandeliers suspended from the ceiling were ablaze with wax-candles; nor even—at such times—in the library or sitting-room. On ordinary evenings, however, she made her appearance with great regularity “at early candle-lighting;” and at all juvenile feasts she was considered indispensable, being supposed to confer great dignity and circumstance thereupon.

Poor Whitey was in fact—or rather is, for she still exists—an overgrown candlestick, and according to family tradition once belonged to General Washington. She is certainly quaint and old-timey enough to have flourished at Mount

Vernon in Lady Washington's day, in company with certain high-backed chairs and claw-footed tables still to be seen there.

She is contrived somewhat after this fashion: An upright rod about three feet high standing on a base, or pedestal, and terminating in a large ring, supports near its top a circular plate, which may be raised or lowered at will along the rod by means of a sliding screw. This disc contains sockets for six candles ranged about its rimmed edge. A battered extinguisher swings from a chain on one side, and a huge pair of snuffers hang underneath. The pewter of which base and plate are made has been rubbed and polished by succeeding generations until it shines like silver; and when, as sometimes used to happen, six candles of Mammy's best home-made were alight at once in the sockets, Poor Whitey presented to our childish eyes a gorgeous spectacle indeed!

Mammy grumbled a little when we insisted on having six whole ones for our "sugar-candy night;" but she gave them to us nevertheless; and I helped Mandy, myself, stick them in the sockets, and went

with her when she carried Poor Whitey — bright from an extra polishing — over to the Quarter.

There, everything was bustle and confusion. It was the morning of the annual Plantation Festival which celebrates the wind-up of the “rolling.” The last load of cane had been hauled from the fields to the sugar-house, and the “Rose Blanche Procession Day” had come.

“Now, chillun,” said Mammy, when we had deposited Poor Whitey carefully in a corner of her cabin, “jes’ you clar yo’se’fs out. Caze I gwine ter shet de cabin-do’ twel night; an’ den, *ef* hit ‘pear lak fum what Mis’ Lucy say, dat you is ‘haveded yo’se’fs whilse I is been gone ‘long o’ de Percession, I is gwine ter gin you de fines’ sugar-candy night you is had sence de young Marsters, an’ Virg, *an’* Dandy, is march off ter de wah ter de chune o’ *De gal I lef’ behine me.*”

It was the last day of the year, clear, shining, crisp. A chill wind had shriveled the petals of the Christmas roses that glowed redly on their straggling bushes in the rose-garden; but the fruity smell of the sweet-olive was everywhere, and

the violet-beds were purple with bloom. The river-breeze parting the brown, rusty grass on the lawn showed an undergrowth of delicate tender green; a daring horn appeared here and there at the roots of the tall, dry banana-stems; the orange-crop had been gathered, but under the glossy leaves a few forgotten globes of gold still hung; while all around them were hints of swelling flower-buds; and even—if you searched carefully—you might find a shining, white-petaled, odorous flower!

At nine o'clock the sugar-house whistle blew. At the shrill sound the four little boys, who had been up and dressed since daylight, broke away from mother and tumbled down the steps—the pink streamers on their hats flying in the wind. For that was the signal for the starting of the Procession. It came along the lane with a great beating of home-made drums, and a blowing of big conch-shells that almost drowned the jubilant ringing of the Plantation-bell. As it turned in at the carriage-gate and began to wind around the shelled drive, away down at the end of the line,

in the very last cart, Big Mose stood up. His burly form looked gigantic against the background of the clear morning sky. We heard him “patting Juba” for a minute and then his powerful voice burst forth sweet and sonorous:

Git-a long, nigger, de jubilee am come!

Two hundred throats took up the chorus and it swept along the line, preceded by a peculiar, long-drawn, plaintive shout that rose and fell and rose again, ending in a sharp staccato jerk:

Hi-yi-YII! De rollin', de rollin' am done!

Big Mose: Ef dey's gwine ter be er hoe-cake de nigger want some,

Cho: *Hi-yi-YII! De rollin', de rollin' am done!*

Uncle Joshua led the Procession mounted on mother's own big sugar-mule; then came all the high-wheeled carts and long-bodied wagons belonging to La Rose Blanche and all the Rose Blanche negroes in them, dressed in their Sunday-best.

The wheels of the carts and wagons were wound with Spanish moss and garlands of glossy green jessamine from the swamp. Tall boughs of wild-

peach were nailed to the sides and nodded over the seats. The harness of the mules was decorated with tassels of red and yellow yarn; and banners and streamers of bright-colored homespun cloth were borne aloft by the riders.

The sugar-mule stopped of his own accord before the front steps. The singing ceased abruptly and Uncle Joshua took off his hat and stood up in his stirrups. It was a great day for Uncle Joshua, and although he laughed, showing his white teeth, and held his head proudly, the tears poured down his wrinkled old cheeks while he made his speech.

He waved his hand toward mother standing on the top step, and said that "Aldo' de Madame dar am er invalique, an' am never had de win' blow col', er de sun shine hot on her face whilse Marse John wuz hyar, an' dey wa'nt no wah; yit she have tooken de place on top o' her hade, an' de white chillun an' de black pipple in her lil' hans, lak er pail an' two buckets o' water; an' she is done toted 'em clean ter de een o' de crap-year 'd'out spillin' nary drap. Derefore, I axes fer de bigges'

cheer fer de Madame dat wuz ev'n been heerd on
dis Plantation!"

It came: and a rousing one it was; for every man, woman and child from the Quarter—except old Aunt Rose and the smallest of the babies—was out in the Procession. Mother ran down the steps and shook hands with Uncle Joshua and said that if it had not been for him, how could she have got along? And what would she have done anyway if her people had not stood faithfully by her through all these years of trouble and heart-ache?

Then they all broke out again in loud hurrahs for Mis' Lucy—and for Marse John—an' De Young Marsters—“'d'out fergettin' o' Virg an' Dandy whar is off yander helpin' ter carry on de wah!”

The little boys climbed up into the foremost cart with Mammy and Aunt Hester. M'lindy and 'Riah and Sophy came out of the house giggling and tossing their heads and were crowded into the next wagon. There was room for Mandy too, but she waved her hand disdainfully and

called down from the veranda: "Go 'long wid yer, niggers! I ain't gwine ter be cotch in no sech er comp'ny ez you is! I is gwine ter stay home 'long o' my Miss May."

I ran to her gratefully for I knew she was dying to go!

And as soon as the sugar-mule could be got to understand that mother was not going too, the Procession moved off.

Big Mose took up his song again and the refrain came echoing back along the lane and from far down the levee-road, as they rolled slowly away to Bon Soldat:

Big Mose: De rabbit an' de yalligater comin' ter de feas',

Cho: *Hi-yi-YII!* De rollin', de rollin' am done!

Big Mose: De coon an' de possum makin' lak dey mighty
pleas',

Cho: *Hi-yi-YII!* De rollin', de rollin' am done!

We could even hear it, faintly, when, the serenading at Bon Soldat over, they wound along the river-side to Ridgefield and River-View — for it is the custom for the Rolling-Procession to visit all the neighboring plantations.

It was sundown before they came back. Big Mose's voice was a little husky, and his tall form swayed backward and forward in the cart, as if his knees might be a little shaky under him, but the song was as stirring and the chorus as rampant as ever when they passed down the lane to the sugar-sheds :

Big Mose: Oh, bake dat hoe-cake, yaller-gal, an' bake it mighty brown!

Cho: *Hi-yi-YII!* De rollin', de rollin' am done!

Big Mose: Sizzle up de bacon-fat an' shake de coffee-groun',

Cho: *Hi-yi-YII!* De rollin', de rollin' am done!

Time was when half the Parish gathered at La Rose Blanche the night of the Rolling-Feast. Then, the grown-up ladies and gentlemen would stroll over to the Quarter and look on for awhile at the games and dancing there, and go back to wait in the great-house parlors, with music and perhaps a quadrille or two of their own, until the children, sticky and sleepy, but very happy, came over from Mammy's cabin. For "sugar-candy night," our own special feast, was always at Mammy's cabin.

But now, only Madame Brion was come, and there was only Odille and Angèle to walk through the twilight, with Sissy-Maria and Lucindy-Keturah and me, across to the Quarter.

The dance was down at Aunt Ca'lline's at the other end of the Quarter; and the chu'ch folks around Aunt Hester's fire next door were singing hymns. Stretched along under the trees in front of these two cabins were long tables set out with great dishes of cold barbecued meats and sweet-potatoes; there were generous trays of salt-risin' bread and bowls of *cuit*; and platters of snow-balls and other old-fashioned cakes of Mammy's baking.

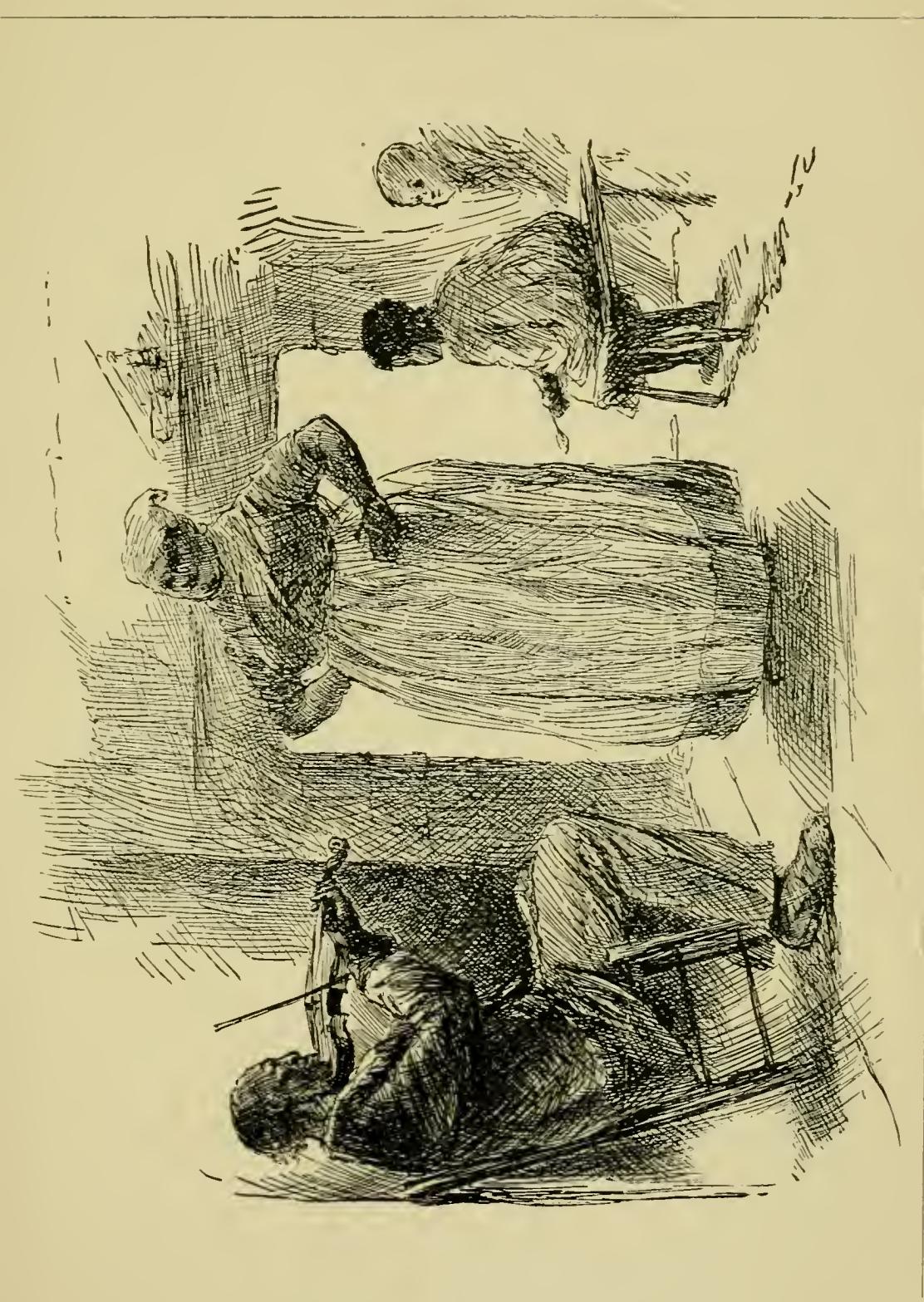
The fiddles were scraping away down there at a lively rate; and the sound of hilarious laughter and of shuffling feet mingled with the lugubrious strains of baptisin' songs, led by Uncle Brother Jack Yates.

There was music in Mammy's cabin too. Uncle Joshua sat by the open door, his raw-hide-bottom chair tilted back against the jamb. His fiddle was tucked under his chin and he was playing

softly and sadly, with eyes half-closed and his out-stretched foot beating time. In the corner near by sat Jerry with his banjo. Jerry was a "seeker" and not "fitten" yet, he thought, to go with the chu'ch folks in Aunt Hester's cabin; and not quite satisfied in his own mind as to how much "de Debble" might have to do with the frolic in full swing at Aunt Ca'lline's.

The big pot was already on the fire, with Mandy stationed in front of it to watch it and keep the candy from boiling over. The little boys, with Aunt Ca'lline's "triplers," Marthy, Mary and Laz'-rus, and Aunt Hester's coal-black little Chiltowee, were ranged solemnly around the hearth, with big blue aprons tied under their chins. Mammy was lighting Poor Whitey's candles.

When she caught sight of us she made a dash toward us holding up her hands. "Laws, chile," she exclaimed, "I dunno fer sho', what Mis' Lucy is done been thinkin' 'bout ter let you come ter de sugar-candy night dress' up in dat caliker dress whar she done gin forty dollars er yard fer, Con-fed'rit money! An' look at Mis' Brion's lil' gals



MAMMY DANCES "SUGAR-IN-DE-GOURD."

in dem 'spensive mo'nin' cloze whan dey Maw knows de Yankees ain't gwine ter let no mo' run de *block-ade*: Jes' you all put on dese here home-spun ap'uns, an' don't you dar' ter tek 'em off whilse you is in dis cabin. Law! Law! we-all's fambly is powerful extrav'gunt! But who gwine ter blame 'em! Ain't dey de bes' o' de quality!"

She went back to Poor Whitey who, with her crown of candles, adorned the table, which contained, besides the buttered plates for the candy, a store of good things from the Rolling-Feast tables.

The wind blew softly in moving the flames of the candles and stirring the ruffled hangings of Mammy's big four-posted bed in the corner. We were all very quiet as yet, holding our breath lest that fatal "turning back to sugar" should befall the boiling candy. There was hardly a sound except the steady pat of Uncle Joshua's foot keeping time to the soft undertones of his fiddle and Jerry's banjo; and the funny little clank of Abel's (Mammy's one-legged pet rooster) wooden stump as he strutted about the floor.

But, hark ! Old Jupe lying on the doorstep raised his head and growled. Uncle Joshua's foot ceased its rythmic beat and he held his bow suspended in air. There was a confused trampling noise in the lane, the sudden rush of horses' feet, an outcry of angry voices, a pistol-shot—and another!—another! Then we heard the click of the big-gate latch and quick galloping around the drive and up to the great-house.

A half-second or more of breathless silence in which *On Jordan's stormy banks* and *Billy-in-the low-ground* came floating in, strangely blended together, from the feast; then light footsteps sounded in Mammy's little garden, and two men leaped in at the open door, and stood hesitating and uncertain in the midst of us.

They were bareheaded, and one of them had his arm in a sling. The brass buttons on their grey jackets flashed in the light.

They were panting heavily as if from a long run, and they looked with half-defiant, half-appealing eyes from Uncle Joshua who had arisen from his chair, to Mammy on the hearth.

Not a word was spoken. We stared at Mammy in wonder when after a brief pause she laid a hand on the shoulder of one of the intruders and pushed him into the corner behind her big, curtained bed, beckoning at the same time to the other one to follow. When she turned and saw our astonished and tell-tale faces all fixed upon the improvised hiding-place — except Mandy's ; through this scene and all that followed she kept her eyes steadily upon the candy-pot, merely glancing over her shoulder with a grunt when Mammy pounced upon her. When Mammy saw our betraying faces she threw up her hands in a kind of despair.

“ Mandy,” she cried sharply all at once, darting over to the fireplace, “ yer good-fer-nothin’ frazzle, you is lettin’ dat sugar candy bile over sho’s you born ! Lif’ hit offen de fiah fer er minit, an’ don’t you dar ter stir hit, you hear me ? ”

“ Don’t I knows dat yer don’t has to stir sugar-candy ? ” retorted Mandy contemptuously.

“ Joshua, ole man,” continued Mammy, turning to him, “ ef you’ll jes’ tech up *Sugar-in-de-gourd*

lak Daddy use ter play hit whense we wuz young folks, I gwine ter show de chillun dem ar steps whar I tuk de fus' time you ever seed me, de night whense you come on er pass ter de Rollin'-Feas' ter ole Marster's Plantation. Dey ain't none o' dem fool young niggers, not even dem triflin' house-gals, kin step 'em off in dese hyar days."

Uncle Joshua looked at her as if dazed for a moment. Then a sort of light seemed to break over his face. He grinned, but drew his mouth demurely down at once, and nodded solemnly. He tilted his chair back, tucked his fiddle under his chin and began.

No more soft, plaintive undertones now! The bow skipped mincingly over the strings, while Mammy slipped her feet from her shoes and took her position in the middle of the room, with her head well up, and her hands fixed firmly on her hips. Then she began to shuffle her feet slowly, her large body graceful, erect and perfectly motionless, and her head turning gravely from side to side.

The fiddle spoke out. The bow rocked over it

in a perfect ecstasy of mirth. Quick, joyous notes danced along the strings, ending in gay little shrieks, like the bubbling laughter of girls. Mammy's glancing feet responded. A large smile dawned upon her face and her eyes twinkled. I think even Uncle Joshua himself forgot the grey-coats in hiding behind the bed. I know the rest of us did.

As for Jerry, he sat in the corner, with his legs crossed, his head thrown back, and his eyes rolled up in a fervor of delight. His long bony hands skimmed lightly as birds over the strings of his banjo, whose loud humming supported the high-keyed melody of the fiddle.

“Hello! what are you up to in here?”

Music and dancing stopped abruptly at the sound of the rough, threatening voice. It came from a tall man in dark-blue uniform who had stepped quietly upon the threshold. Around him a dozen or more of men were crowded, and behind them we now began to hear the stamping and champing of horses, and to see other faces peering down at us from the saddles.

“What de matter, Sah?” said Uncle Joshua, bringing his chair to the floor with a thump and getting up, fiddle in hand.

“The matter?” said the officer who had spoken before and who held a pistol in his hand. “The matter is that we are after a couple of rebs, and we have run ‘em in here somewhere. We have searched the house and we are going to search this cabin.”

He made a quick determined step forward as he spoke, and his men came crowding in after him.

“Is dat so, Sah?” said Mammy, coming forward with Poor Whitey swinging by the large ring to her forefinger. “Sut’ny, you kin su’ch de cabin, Sah!” she went on, setting Poor Whitey down on the floor directly in front of the officer, “you is skeeren de chillun, an’ runnin’ de resk o’ spilin’ dey sugar-candy, but you is sut’ny welcome ter su’ch de cabin, Sah!”

As she finished her speech I saw her great bare foot steal stealthily out from under the edge of her home-spun skirt and bestow a covert kick upon Poor Whitey.

And, behold, there was Poor Whitey toppling over with a bang and the six lighted candles rolling about in every direction.

We children, all except Mandy whose intent gaze was fixed upon the candy-pot, set up a shriek, for an injury to Poor Whitey seemed to us a far greater calamity than a Yankee invasion! Mammy too began to wail in a heart-broken voice: "What is I gwine ter do ef Po' Whitey am broke! An' she been in we-alls fambly ever sense Gin'l Washington done own her! An' Mis' Lucy an' de chil-lun so powerful keerful o' her—"

The officer looked surly and impatient at first, but broke all at once into a loud laugh. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed, standing by with his arms hanging helpless at his side while Mammy and Uncle Joshua, and two or three of the soldiers scrambled after the candles and righted Poor Whitey. "What a precious to-do over an old pewter thing like that! Come on, boys, there's nobody in here but a parcel of children, and these two old fools!"

The others joined in his laugh and they moved

on to the next cabin, where we heard them pounding on the door, and old Aunt Rose's thin querulous voice in parley with them.

Uncle Joshua resumed his seat, but his fiddle dropped to the floor, and he sat staring blankly at Mammy, while the menacing voices echoed on from cabin to cabin, until they finally broke in upon the singing and dancing at the other end of the Quarter.

Apparently the chase was about given up, for presently we heard the sound of the horses feet as they galloped off down the lane, and the merry-making began again and grew louder and more boisterous than before.

I do not know when the two rebels came out from their hiding-place and passed over to the great-house. Perhaps when the candy, which came out all right under Mandy's steady care, had been poured into the buttered plates, and Mammy allowed us to take it out into the back yard to cool.

Anyway, they were at the great-house the next morning; and they stayed there for the next three weeks, though we children never saw them, and

did not know until afterward that they had been all that time shut up in the little cabinet-room where father kept his fishing-tackle.

They were brothers; nice-looking lads, mother said. They had been home on a short furlough, and were making their way back to their command on the other side of the River.

One night Uncle Joshua thought he might venture to put them across. Randolph, the elder brother, was picked off by the sharp-shooters, when they were nearly in mid-stream. He was instantly killed and his bleeding body dropped over into the river and was borne away on its yellow bosom.

Jack, the younger, made the landing safely and reported to his regiment for duty.

Poor Whitey remains to this day a cherished member of La Rose Blanche family. Not long ago I heard Mammy's voice on the veranda. By its tone I knew that she was back "endurin' o' de wah." I peeped out. She was sitting in a low easy-chair—for Mammy is very old—and in front of her stood two freckle-faced, curly-haired little boys.

"Ef hit hadn't er been fer Po' Whitey," she was saying, "yo' paw wouldn't er never come back an' married into our fambly, an' you wouldn't er been kin to we-all. Caze when he war hid 'hine my bed in de cabin dat night 'long o' yo' po' Uncle Randolph whar de sharp-shoopers done kill, ef Po' Whitey hadn't er tuk hit in her hade ter timble over, de Yankees would er catch him sho'!"

"An' was my mamma married to my papa then?" queried one of the little boys.

"Shucks, chillun, what is you talkin' 'bout!" said Mandy who had come up the steps. "Miss Ma'y wa'nt nothin' but er teenchy lil' gal den, an' she wuz mo' skeerder lessen de Yankees taken dem dolls o' hern — 'specially dat Lucindy-Ketury whar you heern her tell 'bout, dan she wuz 'sturb lessen dey git yo' paw!"

"Dass so!" chuckled Mammy, nodding her turbaned head. "All de same, hit wuz 'long o' Po' Whitey dat de Yankees didn't catch Marse Jack, an' dat huccome yo' maw think so much o' Po' Whitey!"

CHAPTER IX.

A LETTER FROM THE FRONT.

DEY mus' be er blue-coat roun' here some-
whurs!" exclaimed Mandy, stopping ab-
ruptly and beginning to peer about her.

"Why?" I asked, stopping too, but not quaking
with terror as I would once have done at such
an announcement. We were getting used to blue-
coats at La Rose Blanche.

"Caze, I is jes' dis minit heerd ole Mister
Fraid-o'-Yankee gin dat squawk o' his'n whar mean-
ter say dat he is done seed er blue-coat; an' he
sut'ny ain't gin it na'y time yit 'd'out he *is* seed
one."

Sure enough, even as she spoke there he came
around the corner of the carriage-house, the big
white gander, and running as if for dear life!
His wings were out-spread; his neck stretched to

its utmost length; his clumsy yellow feet were beating the dust. He turned his eyes piteously upon us as he went by, but he did not stop; and we watched him with breathless interest as he labored across the back-yard, and up the steps of the great-house veranda; until he finally made a dive at the hall-door and disappeared from view.

“*Dar!* he knows he safe now!” chuckled Mandy.

Mister Fraid-o’-Yankee had had no history—not even a name—up to the day when the Yankees first invaded La Rose Blanche. He had waddled placidly about the stable-yard at the head of a great flock of motherly, respectable geese and long-legged, downy goslings, leading them proudly of mornings down to the wide ditch for their daily swim, and marshalling them at precisely the same hour every afternoon in front of Mammy’s cabin-door to be fed.

But that day had wrought a great change in his destiny! Every feathered thing on the Plantation had that day fallen a victim to the nimble-footed,

noisy, hungry soldiers ; except this same patriarch-gander, who after having been chased around and around the stables, and over and under the little crib, and across the back-yard, had saved himself at last by a despairing flight up the veranda-steps, whence he made his way into the dining-room. There he ensconced himself under the side-board and refused for days to come out. When he did at last make his appearance, bedraggled and very cast-down, he took up his quarters in the sitting-room with us children, and never ventured into the yard until his foes had changed their camp, and even then, only after a long and solemn survey of the premises from the top step.

From that time on, the most distant glimpse of a blue uniform filled him with terror. He would utter one hoarse frightened *squawk*, as Mandy said, and make for the house with all his might, never stopping until he was under the side-board, which he seemed to consider the only safe place of refuge for him.

It was one of the little boys who had dubbed him derisively Mister Fraid-o'-Yankee ; and ole

Mister Fraid-o'-Yankee he had been now for nearly three years.

“ Yes, dey is sholy er Yankee somewhurs roun’ here,” repeated Mandy when we had seen the old gander quite out of reach of real or fancied pursuit, “ an’ dar he am now, Miss Ma’y, down yander by lil’ Miss Ally’s br’ur’s grave ! ”

We had come out of the stable-yard where we had been hunting eggs, and turned into the weed-grown path skirting along the orange-plantation.

A solitary figure in dark-blue uniform was indeed standing beside the grave of “ little Ally’s brother,” as we always called the unknown Yankee lad whose memory we tenderly cherished. He held his cap in one hand and the other rested on the rough wooden cross where half an hour before we had hung the fresh garland daily placed there.

He looked up and saw us as we were stealing away and beckoned us to him. A little of the old tremor passed over me as I went forward, but it melted upon a nearer view of the honest open face and kindly grey eyes of the soldier.

He was a middle-aged man, short and rather

stout with grizzled hair and moustache. He wore a couple of gold stripes on his sleeves. He waved his hand as we came slowly up, and called out cheerily, "Don't you be a-feared, I hain't no idee o' hurtin' you!"

We stopped at the foot of the grave and looked at him in silence. "This poor little chap here," he said presently, touching the sod with his foot, "was in my mess, and a braver and better lad never carried a gun on his shoulder! He hadn't ought to have gone in the fight that day, for he wasn't well; and he was downhearted like; and just the night before he said to me, he said, 'Parker, I don't know how it is, but I feel somehow as if I'm never going to see my mother and my little sister again, and if I get killed to-morrow' — and then he sort of choked and didn't say any more. I come over here with a squad of men soon's we could after the fight looking for him, and I ain't never forgot that there hed been kind hands to bury him; and more than once since, I've been here and seen that kind hands keep on keerin' yet for his grave."

He seemed to be talking to himself rather than to us, and muttered on, as he stooped to pick up a bit of orange-flower from the loose bunches scattered over the mound.

But, as he lifted his head, a confused, hesitating look came into his face. He put his hand into his jacket-pocket. "I've got a letter here that belongs to your folks," he said slowly. "I captured the man that was bringing it myself — yesterday. There was some other things too, for — for your folks, but I guess the Colonel 'll bring them over himself. I thought I'd bring this. It's been read, and there ain't any bad news in it."

He handed it to me. I broke out in thanks and exclamations of delight. "Poor little gal," I heard him say as he turned away.

"He didn't mean me, did he, Mandy?" I asked as we ran along the broad sweet-scented avenue of orange-trees toward the house.

"I reckon he mus' er meant lil' Miss Ally," suggested Mandy.

Mother was in the dining-room cutting out clothes for the field-hands. Mammy was busy

putting together and folding the pieces, and Sophy was running out every few minutes with great bundles to the sewing-women at work in the weaving-room. Over by the front windows cousin Nellie was directing M'lindy and 'Riah who were braiding palmetto. The four little boys seated on the floor were soberly sorting out palmetto-strips.

But when we came running in with the letter everything stopped. It was a bulky package composed mostly of scraps of brown paper written upon with a lead-pencil. Mother grew a shade paler as she took it. "Oh, it's been read, mother," I cried gayly, "there ain't any bad news in it!"

It was from brother Hart and dated more than six months ago. But it was also the first letter from the boys for more than a year! And how our hearts beat while we listened!

"Dere Mother," it began, the bad spelling seeming somehow to bring him nearer to us, it was so like him! "The boy hasn't got it *in* him to spell properly," Tom Dennison the tutor used to say with a doleful laugh.

* “ Dere Mother, we have not written since we were marched over to Tennessee last fall to help fight the battle of Chickamauga ; and the last we heard from home was when Father came back from there. (And we have seen him only once since then.) We know we ought to have written, and brother Tom would write (now that we have a chance to send a letter), but he is on duty. I am laid up (with not much the matter—a little stratch only—) and Virg is waiting on me. I will try and tell you all that has befallen us since we wrote last.

“ We miss poor Wes so much ! Sometimes I think I can hear him calling me through the noise of a fight, as he did when he lay dying at Chickamauga !

“ But, I will tell you about our movements since we wrote last.

“ After leaving Chattanooga, we had but little fighting the balance of last winter except a small affair at Knoxville ; but we spent a miserable win-

* Written by Hartwell Moore, Company A, 1st Texas Regiment, Hood's Brigade.

ter in East Tennessee. We were where we could not get either rations or clothes from the Government, and we lived by foraging in the country (Virg is the best forager you ever saw!) and the only active service we did was an occasional brush with some stray cavalry, and now and then to run down a bushwacker. By the time spring came we were in the worst possible fix. (It would be spring at La Rose Blanche but it seemed like mid winter when we began to move on for Virginia.)

“One morning General Longstreet called for all the men that had shoes to report at Head Quarters, and out of our whole regiment of over 400 men, there were but 20 that had shoes and a suit of clothes. (Brother Tom was among these lucky ones, but I wasn’t—somehow.) The rest were a sorry-looking lot of men; most all were barefooted, and all were ragged and dirty. The men that had shoes and clothes were detailed from each regiment, and I believe that out of the whole corps there were only about 400 or 500 men. They gave them axes and sent them ahead to build fires

at short intervals, and our march was a sort of scramble from one fire to another. There was no order about it ; we were allowed to get as warm as we could at one fire, and then go as far as we could, and then stop at another. I need not say that we were scattered along the rout for about 100 miles, but all finally got to the line without accident or loss. (I thought the cold would kill both Dandy and Virg !) From there they brought us on by train to Charlottesville, and there we drew rations and clothes and we were as proud as soldiers could well be to look decent once more.

“ It was here we drew for the first time coffee as rations (shore enough coffee and none of your parched meal !). We only got a tablespoonful of green coffee for 3 days rations. (We generally used ours to play odd-or-even with !)

“ But we hadn’t had any fighting for some time and the boys were getting tired of doing nothing.

“ So that it was a welcome order which said one day ‘ Cook 3 days rations and be ready to move in 2 hours.’ That is about the way we always



IN THE MIDST OF THE BATTLE.

get our orders. Well, we didn't get the cooking done, but we did move in the 2 hours.

"We had been away so long that we did not know where the Yankees were, or our own army, either, for that matter; but from the way they hurried us on, and from an all-night march, with but 3 hours halt, we knew there was something up.

"This was about the 4th of May 2 days before the battle of the Wilderness (2 months ago.)

"It was on that morning that I was made Color-Bearer. There was no sentiment wasted on it. Our Company is the color-company by position in the Regiment. We have 2 stands of colors, a State flag and a battle-flag. It was the State flag that was given to me. There was little seremony about the presentation. As we were about to move, my Captain ordered me to the front to receive the colors of our Great State, the flag that more than 50 men had been killed while bearing it, and the same colors that had been the Guide to a thousand men who were perfectly willing to die for it, and the last thing that many a man had

looked at as he drew his last breath ; and the same flag that but 2 days after, led some 175 men to death or greevous wounds. This was the formal presentation by the Captain ; I was ordered to the front :

“ ‘ Private ——, you are hereby detailed to carry the flag. You will have the rank of sergeant, and are hereby relieved from all company duty. Fall in ! right-face ! forward, march ! arms at will, rout step ! ’

“ So I am a Color-Bearer ; and brother Tom is a Corporal. And Virg and Dandy are proud I can tell you. They think we are bigger than Major-Generals !

“ So we mooved along day and night in good spirits, for all the signs pointed to active work. We marched all night the night of the 5th and the morning of the 6th found us on the road to the Wilderness.

“ It was a beautiful morning and we all enjoyed it. For there was not a man that ever thought that before the sun that was just rising went down, more than one half of us would be dead or wounded,

with thousands of others. But when the sun began to come up it was as red as blood. I have never seen the sun look as red as it did that morning.

“A few minutes after we saw the sun, we heard a cannon-shot — the first we had heard for months, and we might have thought it a sunrise-gun, if it had not been followed by so many others. We knew then that the day’s work had begun. As we were in good spirits, there was many a joke passed around about the *furlough wounds* some of us would get, for you know no one gets a leave of absence now except for a wound.

“Now, we meet a courier, his horse just able to stagger along, but still nobly doing his best — some would say ‘under whip and spur’; but a cavalryman, or a courier does not use whip or spur. They can get more ride out of a horse than any one. They just stick close to the horse, lean forward and help him over all the bad places, and neither beat nor kick the wind out of him; and so long as he is able to move the horse will go, and often stops to drop dead.

“We meet the courier and at once there comes the order: ‘Forward! Double-Quick! March!’ Then all sounds ceased except the rattle of our harness and the tramp of our feet. On we go, over miles and miles (we were 8 miles off.) We have no orders except once in a while ‘close up!’ Now, some of the heavier-burdened begin to get behind. Our officers do not urge them, or order them along, for they know that every man that is going in the fight will be there somehow, and those that mean to shirk will do it anyhow.

“On we go, never breaking the double-quick. Now those that we were leaving come on under all the steam that they can put on. Most of them have thrown away their knap-sacks and blankets, and as they step in rank they gasp out: ‘if we win I can get all the blankets I want, and if we lose I won’t need them’ — and many a man never did need them.

“We speed on, and meet courier after courier, but can go no faster.

“All in front has become silent. Now we begin to see a few wounded men. (You know a

wounded man can go where he pleases.) Still we have no news from the front.

“Now, we halt for a few moments to take 60 rounds of ammunition, and make hasty inquiries at a house if there has been any fighting around there. She only says that the whole Earth is covered with soldiers. ‘What are they? *Yanks* or *Rebs*?’ ‘All sorts! ’

“On again at a double-quick. Now we come to where the fences have been pulled down for the Cavalry to Operate. A little farther and we are in the woods that begin the Wilderness. Now we come to field-hospitals, with surgeons busy, and all around under the trees wounded men. Now we come to wagons, and disabled Artillery, some with 2 and some with 3 horses; and now to a confused lot of men, horses, cannon, wagons and ambulances.

“We know by this time that it has been almost, if not quite a defeat; and it gets worse and worse as we move on, for here we find small groups of men crowded around a torn flag, and officers rushing around trying to rally their men, some com-

manding and some begging them to get to their places. The men seemed to have lost all heart, but as we came along and they knew that releef was at hand, they took new courage and began to get to their places, and even raised a faint cheer as we passed them.

“ Then there is a little space where there is nothing but dead and wounded, the dead grim and silent, and the wounded crying for water and some praying for death.

“ Now, we are thrown out in line of battle and move on more steady. We come to a small open place and here find a battery of 6 guns, all that was between the armies of Grant and Lee.

“ There was a few officers near the guns, but none of them looked very lively. As we pass the battery they cease firing and we moove silently on, down to a line of thick brush-wood where we know that some of us at least will meet death, and an uncertain fate for all. We get nearer and nearer the wood. All the skirmishers are in and we make ready for the first shock when God of Heaven ! there is *General Lee!* He passes through our

ranks. There is no need to call a halt, for as one man we halt, and there is a mighty shout of '*Go back General Lee! Go back General Lee!*' Some men seize his bridle-rein and some catch his stirrups. He waves them off and turns to us and says:

“‘On this Brigade depends the fate of this day. The enemy must be held until our men come up. I will lead you myself.’

“There was not a man to move; but still the cry of '*Go back General Lee!*'

“Then our General Lee raised his hat and rode back. All this time there had not been a single shot fired from either side.

“Just here a poor little rabbit, so scared that it did not know what to do, came and laid itself down at the feet of one of my mess-mates. He took it tenderly up and put it in his haversack.

“Now comes the order: ‘Forward guide centre! keep cool, men! aim low!’ With a wild yell we dash forward, and but a few steps and we receive a terrible volley at the shortest possible range. What wide gaps it makes in our ranks!

but we close them up and rush forward, and gain inch by inch, giving volley for volley.

“ But how very thin our ranks are getting ! and the smoke is so thick that we cannot see, but stumble over the dead and wounded of the enemy, whom we are already pushing back. Now, they bring up a fresh line and we sway back and forth for a few moments ; then they break and we gain a little ; now they rally and come down on us, as if to crush us with weight of numbers. We are down in a little ditch, almost surrounded, but determined not to give up, for has not our General Lee told us to hold them back until our men come up !

“ Now we hear the thunder of a battery coming down, and they unlimber close to us and we hear every order as they load the guns. Still not a man has thought of giving up ; when thank God, we hear close in our rear the old rebel yell, and we know that is our relief. And they do come with a rush, capture the battery before it has time to fire a shot ; and we are moved back to rally what few there is left of us.

“ We were in there just 3 quarters of an hour,

and we lost one half of our men. Of the 12 that went in as color-guard, the other flag-bearer and myself were the only ones that came out at all, and our flags were both full of holes and the staffs shot in several places.

“ But our work was done for that day. We reformed our Brigade and only lost a few more men in a charge later in the day.

“ Neither brother Tom, nor Virg, nor Dandy, nor myself was hurt that day ; a bullet tore the top of brother Tom’s cap off, and that was all.

“ Well, you may want to know the fate of the man and the rabbit. I know little Sis and Mandy will. Dandy and Virg say that the rabbit was a ‘luck-charm,’ for that night as we all sat by a little fire among thousands of dead and wounded, my mess-mate took out the rabbit from his haversack.

“ It was alive, and neither the rabbit nor the man had a scratch ; and as we talked over the many things that had happened that day, he cooked the rabbit on a ramrod over the fire and we all ate him ! That sounds cruel I know dere

Mother! But you must not forget that we are about half-starved all the time!

“And now as my hand aches, I reckon I will have to let brother Tom tell the rest of the story. He sends his love and so do Dandy and Virg. Father was well when we heard from him last. Dominique is writing to his mother and sends his love to you. Tell Mammy that we wish often for some of her good-go-downs.

“We will soon be coming home we think for the Confederacy is *bound* to be *reconized* and the war can’t last much longer. With love dere Mother,

Your son,

HART.

“Jes’ look at dat now,” cried Mammy in a burst of admiration, as mother finished the reading. “Didn’t I *tole* you, Mis’ Lucy, honey, dat dem chillun wuz gwine ter come home all kivered wid gole, luk dey granpappy’s, an’ dey gret-granpappy’s pickshur whar hangin’ in de parlor! But dey ain’t forgit dey ole Mammy’s good-go-downs, do! An’ ef dey is er *dus’* er flour in de flour barrel — which dey ain’t now — but ef dey *is*

whense dey gits home I gwine ter mek 'em er bakin' o' good-go-downs whar gwine ter mek dey moufs water!"

But mother was not listening. "My poor little Wesley," she murmured with overflowing eyes and with Cousin Nellie's head on her shoulder.

"Dass so," said Mammy, her face changing. "De chile fyar call ter me sometimes in de middle o' de night-time so's I cyan't sleep. Jes' lak he call ter de yuther chile o' my bres', lil' Marse Hart whar is got ter be er Color-Barrier, an' whar writ dat fine letter! But don't you cry, Miss Nellie, honey; he walkin' in de streets o' gole dis minit whar dey ain't no mo' wah!"

"— An' no mo' hongry, an' no mo' col', an' no mo' trebble, an' no mo' br'ur gins br'ur, bless de Lord!" added Uncle Joshua who had come in quietly during the reading of the letter.

"Less play Wilderness," cried Charley to his three companions.

And while they were quarreling about which should be the Yanks and which the Rebs, old Mister Fraid-o'-Yankee came out from under the

side-board. He argued well perhaps from the joyous faces he saw all around; for he walked out on the gallery, and having first carefully spied out the land, he waddled down the steps into the back-yard.

CHAPTER X.

A SOLDIER'S TRYST.

THREE was always that quaint pleasant “corner of La Rose Blanche” down on Rue Royale in the old French Quarter of New Orleans! But during the war-times Rose Blanche seemed suddenly to stretch far and wide its arms, and to take in, here a weather-stained tent, or a rude hut; there a trampled space of ground about a cheery camp-fire with only the sky for a roof; or a long stretch of dusty road echoing to the steady swinging tramp of an army; or a pallet in a crowded hospital-ward; or a bunk in a prison; or even, alas, a smoke-hung, blood-besprinkled battle-field! For wherever father and the boys were, there was a part of La Rose Blanche.

There were a great many happenings in these outlying dependencies of the home roof-tree, that

we knew only long afterward, when peace had come again; and the Blue and the Grey had clasped hands in a union never more to be disturbed.

Here is the story of one of these happenings. Out of the picture that it makes as I recall it, look the dark laughing eyes of Cousin Wesley Branscome, who cried so the day brother Tom and brother Hart went away, because he was not old enough to go too! And who, a year later, shouldered his gun and marched off to join the Selden Rifles in Virginia. How we all ran down to the gate after him the morning he went away! And how much harder it seemed to see him go because there were no flags flying, as when the others marched, and no drum beating, and no fife playing "*The Girl I Left Behind Me*," and no shouting and hurrahs! But only a little squad of recruits, eager indeed but not gay. For the past long sad year had taught us all something of what war meant!

"Tuzzin Wes!" cried little Percy after him as he turned off down the lane, "don't you fordit to tum back!"

"I'm sure to come back, little Perce," called Cousin Wes gayly over his shoulder.

"And that is why they call the place La Rose Blanche," said Tom Dennison.

It was a windless night, and the smoke of the camp-fire floated gently upward toward a clear, steel-blue winter sky where the stars glittered coldly bright. Ruddy light from the blazing logs played over the faded grey uniforms of the men lounging around, and turned their tarnished brass buttons to gold ; further back, in the rude brush tent, it set agleam here, a polished gun-barrel, there, a rusty canteen ; and softened the dinginess of the smoke-hung boughs on the roof and the sombre colors of the soiled and ragged blankets lying in careless heaps upon the well-trampled ground.

Other fires were burning along the narrow valley and under the lee of the snow-covered ridges ; and long lines of brush-tents, with now and then a rough attempt at a log-cabin, stretched out in every direction. For the army was in winter quarters. The guards were tramping their measured beat as usual, and the outer line of pickets

was posted beyond. But there was surcease for a time, of the weary marching and fighting that had been going on now for two years and more. The scanty rations could be cooked and eaten in peace; the thin pallets were spread down at night without anticipation of a sudden arousing drum-beat and a ringing order to "fall in" at midnight; letters home were written (on the backs of old envelopes and scraps of wall paper!) without a continual ducking and dodging to avoid falling shells; the men, idle around their cheery fires, fought their battles over, and told over and over their worn-out jokes and stories; or, oftener, talked of the far-away loved ones whose unforget-tten faces filled their waking and sleeping dreams.

"What's that about Rose Blanche, Tom?" said a voice out in the shadow as Sergeant Dennison paused to rake together some falling embers.

"Hello, Nagle!" chorused the whole group heartily; "come in, Sid, come in, old fellow"—a needless invitation since the owner of the voice had promptly followed it and dropped unceremoniously upon an unappropriated blanket.

“What were you saying about La Rose Blanche, Tom?” he repeated, reaching out for a coal and balancing it carefully upon his pipe.

“I was just telling these cold-blooded Virginia fellows,” replied Tom, “that snowed up as we are here — in these mountains, down in our country the spring-sap is rising; and around one plantation that we know — eh, Sid! there are miles of Cherokee-rose hedges that just about now are all white with buds and flowers.”

“That’s so,” assented Sid.

“But that’s not the reason they call it La Rose Blanche,” added Tom. “You know my mother was born in that dear old house and she knows all its traditions! They have a pretty story that goes away back to the early days of the first white settlers, about the finding of a pale-face baby-girl by an old Indian chief. She lay cooing and laughing on her dead mother’s breast in the lone little cabin that stood just where the plantation-house now stands; and a few rods away her father was lying face-downward with a bullet hole in his forehead. The old chief took the baby into his own

wigwam and gave her a name whose liquid syllables meant in our tongue The White Rose. The story goes on to tell how she grew up the joy of the old chief, her adopted father, and the delight of the tribe. Then came along, somehow, a young French officer who wooed and won and carried away *La Rose Blanche* from the mourning tribe. At least that is the gist of the legend. At home, even little Ma'y has it all at her fingers' ends."

"Wa'al!" drawled a huge red-bearded fellow at the other side of the fire who was busily carving from a bit of polished bone a tiny high-heeled slipper, "I hain't got much senty-mint 'bout the Injuns, an' I don't keer much 'bout roses, but I *do* wisht I had some o' them sugar-house merlasses they make down thar, stidder the sorghum the Corn-fed Gov'-mint g'ves us!"

"And over at Bon Soldat," pursued Tom, taking up his interrupted story, "there's a double row of red and white oleanders that—do you see that, boys? that chap has gone again!"

The visitor looked up startled by the sudden break in Tom's harangue and at the altered tone.



"THE WHITE ROSE" AND THE OLD CHIEF.

"Who is gone? What is it?" he demanded, looking around bewildered.

"Oh, nothing!" replied Tom, still shading his eyes with his hand and peering out into the shadows beyond the firelight. "Or rather," he added, sinking back upon his pile of blankets and returning his pipe to his lips, "it's that boy. Come to think of it, Sid, he's your cousin, and—"

"Wes Branscome? Yes. Well, what of him? Where is he, by the way? He was here when I came in! However, I reckon he has gone over to my mess. The boys are having some kind of a shindy over there. His cousins, Tom and Hart, are there with their body-servants. Listen! There's Virg and Dandy singing now!"

On the still night air came the lugubrious refrain :

"De Lawd d'liver Dan-*yull*
Dan-*yull*, Dan-*yull*,
From de lion den.
De Lawd d'liver Dan-*yull*
An' de same Lawd gwine d'liver me too!"

"How that does take me back to Rose Blanche,"

mused Tom a little wistfully. "No, he's not over there," he went on energetically. You know, Nagle, I—" he broke off abruptly and colored a little.

"Yes, I know you are going to marry his sister — and a mighty pretty girl my cousin Nell is too," responded his friend tranquilly. "But what is the matter with Wes?"

"The truth is," said Tom, "none of those Rose Blanche boys have got any business in the army! Tom, perhaps; he is a stout sturdy lad, but Wesley and Hart when they first came, looked like a couple of girls with their rosy cheeks and yellow curls —"

"Look enough like girls yet!" interpolated Jack Winter from his pallet in the tent.

"Well, when Wesley came on the first batch of recruits, Aunt Lu—his aunt wrote me a letter and put the boy in my charge. Said I was to look after his morals too, don't you know? And somehow I can't help feeling responsible for the little chap, good-conduct and all!" and Tom sighed. "He's a plucky boy, and no mistake. Never flinched even under his first fire. I have fairly

to hold him back sometimes ! A real straight-up-and-down little man every way. But since we've been in camp here — six weeks almost, you know, he has slipped out quietly nearly every night about this time ; and two or three hours later, he steals in again. Never says where he's been ; even his cousins don't know ; gets past the guards somehow ; and well, I'm mightily concerned to know where he is spending his time, that's all ! ”

“ Rustic sweetheart,” suggested Nagle sententiously.

“ May be so,” replied Tom, gazing into the fire.

“ Anyhow,” growled Winter, “ the little chap is so awfully sneaky about it ! ”

“ We've all chaffed him a good deal,” Dennison went on. “ But he does not seem to care, and I am afraid — fact is, Sid, I am worried and anxious about the boy and I don't know what to do.”

“ Tell you what,” replied his friend after a moment's silence, “ we'll follow him and find out what he is up to. That is ‘sneaky’ too,” he added with a laugh, “ but you owe it to Aunt Lucy — and Nell.”

“Done!” said Tom, blushing again.

The next night was raw and dark. The snow which had lain for days frozen hard upon the ground had turned to a cold and disagreeable slush; and the wind as it swept down from the mountain-tops was charged with fine points of sleet that stung like needles when they struck the faces of the guards moving silently back and forth on their boats. Sergeant Dennison and Private Nagle marched forward along the lonely winding road that struck off toward the foot-hills of the gigantic mountain that frowned away to the left, and down which the slender form in front of them had turned after leaving the camp well behind. Nowadays a boy of sixteen with his hands in his pockets and his cap pulled down upon his forehead, trudging alone along a dark and lonesome road, would be whistling gayly to keep himself company; but in those times when the next turning might show a phalanx of blue-coats, or from the next clump of bushes might come the crack of a rifle, men and boys learned silence and watchfulness. So, one shadow went warily between

the naked trees where the wind shrieked; and two other shadows followed noiselessly, now stopping lest they should be seen or heard, now hurrying lest they should lose sight of the unconscious object of their curiosity.

It was nearly two miles from camp when Wesley Branscome turned abruptly to the left and disappeared. The two men who were following him reached the mouth of the wide ravine just in time to see him spring up a little wind-swept ridge, upon which, dimly outlined against the cloudy sky, stood a small low cabin. From the door, as the lad opened it, a ruddy glare came pouring out, illuminating the rocky slope where the snow lay in patches, and flashing down upon the muddy waters of the little stream that rushed noisily along the bottom of the ravine. It was gone immediately, for the door closed with a bang; but beneath the clumsy wooden shutter of the single window a line of light gleamed, and after waiting some moments the two spies crept softly up the ridge and applied their eyes to this crack.

It afforded them a full view of the interior of

the one room of the little hut. There was no light except that from the fire blazing in the wide fireplace, but that sufficed to show the clumsy loom in one corner with an unfinished piece of dark cloth upon it, and the ample feather-bed, with blue coverlid and white pillows on the rude bedstead, in the other. A rickety ladder between them led up to a hole in the low rough ceiling. On one of its rounds squatted a great reddish-brown rooster, with his head under his wing. His feathers glistered in the firelight. Bunches of herbs, strings of red pepper and "hanks" of bluish yarn hung against the walls, and a pine table with a few homely blue dishes upon it was set squarely across the door on the opposite side of the room. On a low chair in a corner of the vast fireplace sat an old woman with snow-white hair and lean wrinkled face. She was carding wool. A pile of fleecy rolls lay on the floor beside her, so delicate and symmetrical that it was a wonder how the feeble old hands and the well-worn cards could have wrought them.

Directly in front of the fire stood a tall thin-

legged spinning-wheel. From this came a loud monotonous *whiz-z-bur-r-r*, and a regular *click, click*, as the spinning-stick struck the flying spokes. Wesley Branscome was the spinner. He had thrown off his heavy over-coat and his cap. His yellow curls shone as he stepped forward — a trim, slight, boyish figure in a faded grey jacket and ragged trousers — forward and backward and forward again — deftly lengthening out the roll and running the thread upon the spindle ; then catching a fresh roll from the pile on a chair beside him to add it in turn to the fast-growing white cone.

For a time there was no sound in the room but this *whiz-z, bur-r-r, click, click* and the measured one, two, forward, and one, two, three, backward step of the boy, and the soft *scratch, scratch*, of the old woman's cards.

Dennison outside, turned wondering eyes upon his companion, who nudged him with his elbow and gave a meaning look at the ladder.

Of course ! Down that shaky stair would presently descend the buxom Omphale for whose sake this young Hercules was spinning.

Hard upon the smiles which overspread the faces of the watchers at this conclusion, the old woman laid down her cards and began poking among the glowing embers with a bit of stick.

“Wessy,” she said, in a thin, sweet quavering voice, “I’ve got some taters a-roastin’ fer ye.”

“Oh-h ! *have* you?” cried the young soldier in a tone of boyish rapture, stopping his wheel and going down on his knees on the broken hearth.

“D’ you reckon they’re done, Granny? Let me take ‘em out.” He shaded his eyes with one hand and raked out a couple of enormous ash-covered yams. At the savory odor that came floating through the crack as he laid them open, Tom Dennison and his companion hardly restrained a groan of envy.

“M-m-m! but they’re nice! Have some, Granny.” He was squatted upon his heels before her, and she leaned over and patted his shoulder with a loving old wrinkled hand.

“No, chile, *I* don’t want none. I’m jes powerful glad to see you eaten of ‘em — I hain’t cyarded much ter-day,” she added presently.

"Been weavin'?" asked Wesley, with a backward glance at the same time over his shoulder at the loom.

"No; settin' the dye fer them las' hanks. Like ter froze my han's off. But we mos' done, Wessy."

He nodded.

"Lor, how proud Bigy an' Jim 'll be! Hit's been nigh about five weeks, hain't it, Wessy?" said Granny.

He nodded again, munching his potato.

"I hed come home from my Liddy's fu'nal an' was a-settin' here with the do' shot to, wonderin' how them boys o' hern, 'way off yander in Comp'ny G. were gwine ter git the cloze she'd promised 'im, an' rit an' rit ter 'em about; an' me with all the wool in the house, an' nobody to he'p me. An' you come jumpin' the fence ter git er drink o' water — "

A sly twinkle came into the old soul's watery eyes as she uttered the last sentence.

The lad laughed.

"Now, Granny," he said, "you *know* I was

runnin' your red rooster! I didn't know anybody was in the house."

"He's gettin' mighty fat," she replied, following his glance over toward the ladder. "We-uns is gwine ter have him biled the night we git the las' hank spun."

"Oh, I *wish* we could heve a chicken-pie, Granny—an' *dumpalin's*!"

"Wa-al, mebby we *kin* somehow. An' I tolle you 'bout Liddy an' them boys o' hern in Comp'ny G., an' ez how I wanted ter make the cloze she were so sot on makin' fer 'em. An' you 'lowed that ef I'd larn you ter spin *you'd* he'p me make 'em." Another nod from the boy. They were evidently rehearsing an oft-repeated scene.

"Granny," he said, suddenly springing up and looking down at her with a quizzical expression, "what do you suppose the boys in camp think? They think that I come out every night to see — my sweetheart," and a peal of laughter rang through the cabin, waking the fat rooster, who uncovered his head, flapped his wings, and uttered a hoarse crow.

"Shucks, you don't say," cried the old dame, turning a smiling wrinkled face up toward him.

"That they do," and he broke into a shuffling dance to the tune of "*The Years Creep Slowly By, Lorena,*" whistled in quick time.

After which he caught up the spinning-stick in one hand, and a fleecy roll in the other, and the *whiz-z, bur-r, click, click*, one, two, forward, one, two, three, backward step began again.

The gentle *scratch, scratch*, of the cards chimed in, and soothed by these familiar sounds the red rooster stuck his head under his wing again and went to sleep.

During this scene the men outside had not dared to move, fearing to betray themselves. As soon, however, as the noise of the wheel filled the air, they stole stealthily down the slope, and around the projecting mountain-spur, and so out into the slush-covered road again.

Not a word was spoken between them until they had slipped past the guards and were nearing the camp-fires.

Then Sergeant Dennison paused long enough to say :

“ Say, Sid, I feel as if I had been caught stealing a sheep! — or rather, I ought perhaps to say as I would have felt before the war began if I had been caught stealing a sheep ! ”

Private Nagle broke into a queer little laugh. “ Just imagine how you *would* have felt if that blessed pair of innocents had caught you sneaking around that crack in the window,” he said.

“ And I tell you what, boys,” concluded the sergeant, after giving an account of the adventure to his mess, “ you can have my ” — he was about to say hat, but recollecting himself, he took off his shabby cap, looked at it affectionately and returned it to his head with a comical sigh, as if he found it impossible to do the subject justice.

More than a year later, a letter, worn and soiled, and dilapidated with travelling after the army, at length reached the company to one of whose members it was addressed. “ Wessy Brancekum, Seldun Ryefls,” it declared in a big scrawly hand.

Captain Dennison's hands trembled as he took it. For Wesley Branscome was sleeping the long sleep in his unnamed grave on the fatal field of Gettysburg.

Dere Wessy, [it ran,] Bigy an' Jim got thare cloze, but my leg were shot off at Gettysburg an' I'm back with Granny. Jim is ritin' this letter fer me. Grany sens yu her luv an' air mity proud uv the kyards. She sez bee shore an' kum by this way when the Yanks is whipt an' yu lite out fer home so no more

frum Jim Cager

CHAPTER XI.

OUR AFRICAN PRINCESS.

THE orange-flower petals were falling like flakes of perfumed snow upon clean, white sheets spread underneath the trees in the plantation to receive them. And in the kitchen, the orange-flower water, and the still more delicate orange-flower *conserve* were in process of making.

Now, this was in some sort a high and mysterious rite at La Rose Blanche. Mère could never be persuaded that mother knew just how thick the syrup out to be, or precisely the quantity of flowers necessary to produce the flavor. And so she came up every spring from River-View, accompanied by old Justine, and armed with her home-made, time-yellowed, Creole recipe book. On such occasions Hester, the cook, cleared out of the kitchen with a snort, and a muttered fling at

“dem French doin’s.” And with her own small, plump, white hands, Mère sorted out the thick, waxen, sweet-smelling leaves and dropped them one by one into the clear bubbling syrup. Justine meanwhile washed and rinsed dozens of tall, long-necked bottles and placed them in shining rows out on a table in the sun to dry. Cousin Nellie, as a great privilege and on condition of keeping quite still, was allowed to sit on the broad, low window-sill and cut out and twist into shape the funny little paper boats in which the dainty *conserves* would be served. Now and again mother would come to the door with a tray piled high with fresh petals ; these Mère would take from her in impressive silence and empty upon a vast silver salver which she always used at this august ceremonial.

But we children were banished. Not for worlds would we have ventured within reach of Mère’s threatening spoon and her stern and emphatic “*Allez-vous-en, mes enfants !*”

But oh, what joy, after the bottles had been filled and sealed and left standing to cool, and the

flat, wide-mouthed glass jars with their translucent contents were ranged upon the closet-shelves — what joy to be called up and receive, each from Mère's own hands, one of those quaint little paper-boats filled to the brim with the warm, fragrant *conserve*; and to hie away with them to Mammy's cabin, there to beg a bit of cake (or cone-pone !) and play “party” on her doorstep.

But that blissful moment had not yet arrived on this occasion.

It was the next day after brother Hart's long-delayed letter from the front had come ; and such a soft, sunshiny, flower-sweet day ! Old Aunt Rose had brought her troop of babies over from the Quarter to the lawn in front of the house. They were playing there, tumbling about in the long grass like so many little brown elves. Aunt Hester's little Chittowee, with a crown of yellow jessamine on her head, and her eerie black face peeping out from a collar of woodbine and honeysuckle, was leading them like an elfin queen in their noisy revels. Aunt Rose herself sat stiffly erect on a bench by the hedge. Her well-seasoned

switch lay across her lap. Her elbows were pressed against her sides ; her long, bony hands were laid, palm downward, upon her knees ; her feet showing below her scant homespun skirts, were drawn closely together. Her attitude suggested that rock-cut statue of the old Egyptian Queen in her ruined temple, whose picture father had brought home from Egypt, and which hung over his study-table.

Her deep-set eyes, under their bristling white eyebrows, had a dreamy, far-away look.

Little Percy had left off playing and was leaning against her knee. He stroked her tattooed wrists with his soft fingers. "Who hurted you, Aunt Wose ?" he asked suddenly, lifting his blue eyes earnestly to her face.

She looked down at him in her strange unsmiling way, without replying, and then her gaze wandered vaguely on toward the orange-plantation where we could see mother moving along between the trees, stooping here and there to gather the fallen flower petals. Her lean leathery old face brightened ; it seemed almost to shine. She

always looked like that whenever she saw mother.

We seized the moment, knowing it to be a favorable one, and began to beg :

“Oh, Aunt Rose, tell us about when you was a Princess !”

“When you was a Afercan Princess, you know,” besought Charley.

“An’ when you was capshu’d ! Please, Aunt Rose, please !”

She began abruptly, her dreamy eyes still following mother about the orange-grove. That was always her way when she could be induced to tell her story at all, which was but rarely. Her speech was almost like that of our other home-negroes, though Uncle Silas, her brother, the African Prince who belonged to Grandpa Selden, had a curious broken language of his own which was almost unintelligible. But her voice was strangely hollow and monotonous ; and when excited by the memory of her wrongs she became almost terrible. At such times her deep eyes glittered with an uncanny light, and a dark red spot glowed in either hollow of her tawny, sunken cheeks.

"Yass, I is done been *Prin-cess*. An' I is *Prin-cess* yit," she added, almost ferociously. "I is bo'n er King's dotter. Dey uz er gran' town in my country; an' de pipple uz lak de cane what wave in de cane-fiel', dey uz so many! An' in dat town dey uz er gret-house mo' bigger'n Missy's gret-house yonner."

"She mean yo' maw when she say Missy; she al'uz call Mis' Lucy, Missy," explained Mandy, who was sitting at the other end of the bench pretending to knit.

"An' de gret-house uz in de middle o' all de yuther houses; an' it had high trees wid leaf lak bunches o' fedders on top,* all roun' it; an' dat us de King's house. De King he Silas an' me fader. On'y Silas not name *Silas* den, same ez I not name Rose den. Silas he uz Prince Limpopo; an' I uz *Prin-cess* Ghargal. I got oder Prince, whar uz big Chief fur hus-ban'; an' got five chillun; five li'l brown gal, mo' prettier dan any o' dese here nigger-babies," she turned her eyes contemptuously for a moment upon the noisy brood at her feet.

* Palm-trees.

“An’ dey uz er thousan’ nigger stannin’ roun’ de King’s gret-house fur to do we wu’k an’ fur ter mek granjure. An’ when me an’ de five li’l gal is walk out, dey uz nigger walk long fur ter tote de pya’-sol an’ de big fan. I is had de dress all made out’n dem kind of fedders whar used to be in Missy bonnit. An’ dem di’mons whar Missy used ter war in de good times fo’ de wah, dey ain’ nuttin ter dem di’mons whar I is wore roun’ my *wase* lak ropes. An’ dese here marks is de marks o’ African *Princess*.” Aunt Rose touched with an air of pride the tattoo-marks on her forehead, neck and arms.

“Dey uz plenty o’ wah in my country, but not lak *dis* wah. Dey fight heap mo’ braver, an’ dey tek de women un de chillun un’ ca’y ‘em off an’ mek ‘em slave. Dat de way *we* git *we* slave too. But de King, we fader, he big Chief an’ he don’t nebber git whup. All de gret-house shine wid de gole whar he done brung fum de fur-off country. Oh, we all happy den, an’ I uz proud *Princess* wid dem five li’l brown gal !

“One day, dey uz er battle. Er big black

Chief whar come fum yuther side er de mountain, he bu'n up de gret-house, an' done tuk an' ca'y off de King whar uz Silas an' me fader; an' he ca'y off Silas an' me, an' heap mo' fighting men an' lakly women. But he done kill de Prince whar uz my hus-ban', an' he lef terhine all dem li'l brown gal."

"Oh, Aunt Rose," we sighed under our breath.

"An' I ain' nebber seen 'em no mo'." Her voice rose to a shrill cry and her body swayed slowly from side to side. "Nebber no mo'," she repeated and then dropped into sudden silence.

We held each other's hands and hardly stirred until she began again.

"We is trabbel five days, an' mos' six, an' den we done come ter de big water. An' dey uz er boat whar uz so big dat it mek us 'feard. De big black Chief whar brung us, he done sell us ter de Cap'n er de big boat an' den we *his* slave. Dey uz heap er yuther nigger in de boat an' dey done crowd us in; an' we uz down in er dark hole; but we *b'leeve* we kin see de lan' whar we leavin' terhine us; an' de trees whar got lak er bunch er fedders on top;

an' de li'l ribber; an' de freedom, an' de chil-lun, oh de chillun! We stretch out de han's an' cry, while the boat roll high lak dis, an' den roll low lak dat." She stood up and dipped forward until the bow of her pointed *tignou* almost touched the grass, and then arose slowly again to her full height with her arms outstretched. The red flush was beginning to dawn into her sunken cheeks.

"Den de King, my fader, he 'fuse ter eat, caze he ain' nebber been use ter bein' slave. An' one day he say he gwine die, an' he heart break, an' he done die. Den I *fight* an' den dey is wrop de chain 'roun de arms o' de *Prin-cess*."

We shrank back half-afraid before the menacing glow in her eyes. But just then mother went past carrying her flower-piled tray to the kitchen, and the soft look came back into old Aunt Rose's face. She sat down and continued :

"At las' one day dey run de ship up er yaller ribber whar dey call de Bra-z-*us*, an' we uz tuk out. An' some er de niggers uz lef dar but me an' Silas we uz brung in er 'nur boat to New-orl-eends. An'



“WHO HURTLED YOU, AUNT WOSE?” HE ASKED SUDDENNLY.

we uz put in er kine er place whar dey call de slave-pen, 'long wid er heap er yuther slave. By dat time de tears er my eyes dey uz all dry-up, an' de heart in my bres' uz lak er clod fum de fiel' cep'n fur ter *hate*.

"At las' one day we uz tuk fum de slave-pen an' dey done march us two an' two long de streets er New-orl-eends, an' close up ter er gret-house whar gut pos'es lak de King gret-house whar bu'n down."

"She mean de Sain' Charl' Hotel whar yo' paw and maw done stay dat time jes fo' de wah, when dey tuk me wid you alls," interpreted Mandy.

"An' at de corner we *bleege* ter stop, caze dey uz er percession in de way. An' jes' den, 'long come er li'l white gal, jes *so* big. An' she lak er angel, on'y *den* I did'n know nuttin' 'bout no angel. She uz wid er paw an' her maw, an' she done see me, an' she run up an' pass her sof' li'l han's roun' dese marks, same ez de chile done jes' now. She did'n know dem marks uz de marks o' er *Prin-cess*, but she done see de trebble whar uz in my face I reckin', caze she done say wu'ds whar uz sof'-lak

an' sweet. I couldn't un'erstan' dem wu'ds den, but I done un'erstan' whar uz *terhine* dem wu'ds, an' de hard heart lak a clod in my bres' 'gin ter melt."

"She mean dat she done bus' out cryin'," said Mandy.

"An' when dey fetch me ter de block under dat gret-house fur ter be sol', lo an' behole, dar uz dat li'l white gal paw done come ter buy me caze she done ax him will he do it! An' he buy me, an' den he buy de Prince my br'ur whar not name Silas *den*."

"Dat uz yo' grandpa whar got de wood laig dat buy Aun' Rose an' Unk' Silas," said Mandy.

"Den he gi' me ter de li'l white gal an' I done feel lak Prin-cess once mo' when dey tuk me ter de house whar dey uz niggers stannin' roun' ter do de wuk' an' ter wait on de gret pipple."

"Dat uz Fred'ric's Marster's house whar done been kill sence de wah 'gin," said Mandy.

"Dat li'l white gal she uz Missy. I is seen her grow up t'well now she am yo' maw. I is always b'long ter her, an' she *know* I is Prin-cess; an' I

ain' never been feel lak slave since Missy tech me wid dem sof' li'l fingers ! I is aluz been kep' roun' de house t'well I ax Missy fur ter let me min' de babies, caze I is done gittin' ole, an' caze de babies mek me think 'bout dem five li'l brown gal whar I ain' nebber gwine to see no mo'." The sombre look came again into Aunt Rose's eyes, but the curious softening was in her voice as she concluded : " Yass, I is been Prin-cess in Af'ica, an' now I is Missy's Prin-cess. An' Missy, she li'l angel when she *so* big, an' she angel *now*!"

" Dass so, jes ez sho' ez you am bawn ! Dat am er fac' 'bout Mis' Lucy *sho'*," said a voice a little way off. It was Uncle Joshua's. He had a spade in his hand and had come out to work in the violet-beds that bordered the walk. He nodded at Aunt Rose who had settled down upon her bench again with the far-away look on her face, and stuck his spade into the moist brown earth. He began to sing as he always did when he was pottering about mother's flowers :

" Possum up er yum-stump, coony up er holler."

We ran through a gap in the hedge and came

around to where he was. "Now, chillun, jis' you keep out'n de way caze dese here am Mis' Lucy's *vi'lets* an' I got ter be pow'ful keerful, lessen—" he paused, for there came the unwonted sound of horses feet trampling along the lane. Two men rode up to the gate and dismounted. As they came in we saw that they wore blue uniforms, and a moment later we recognized the latter one whom we had seen several times while the *crevasse* was open and the Yankee soldiers had come down to help rebuild the levee. He was the Colonel of the regiment camped above the bend of the river.

The little boys ran through the gap in the hedge to Aunt Rose, and I shrank back leaving Uncle Joshua to go forward and meet them. The tall Colonel stopped when he came up to Uncle Joshua and said something to him in a low tone. Uncle Joshua's voice in reply sounded sharp and unnatural though I could not hear what he said. The officer spoke again and seemed to be urging something; and then Uncle Joshua fell upon his knees and began sobbing and rocking himself to and fro. "Oh," I heard him cry as if half beside him-

self, “*who* gwine ter tell her! I *cyant* tell her! Oh, Lord, whar give an’ whar tek away, hab mussy on her! An’ on de chillun! Oh, *my* Marster! *my* Marster!”

The Colonel stood for a moment as if irresolute and perplexed and then walked on slowly toward the house followed by his orderly. He carried in his hand a sheathed sword which I had seen him take from the soldier as they came in the gateway. Once he turned as if to go back. A quick exclamation broke from him as he faced around again. For there in the walk before him and barring his way stood mother. She had come through the gap in the hedge followed by the little boys who were all huddled about her. She was deadly pale and her great eyes were fixed upon the officer’s face with a look of terror. I had never seen fear on her brave face before and I shivered at it while I wondered what it meant.

The Colonel uncovered his head and the soldier after a moment’s hesitation took off his cap. The weather-beaten faces of the men were almost as pale as mother’s!

There was a short silence ; the officer seemed to be trying to find a way to begin what he had to say.

“ Madame,” he said at last, “ a messenger coming from the other side of the river, and bearing letters and — other messages for this neighborhood has been captured by some of my men. A number of the letters he carried were old — some of them had been drifting about for months. But one among them was of late date and contained the news of — ”

He broke off abruptly and turned away as if unable to bear the look in the eyes gazing into his. His glance fell upon little Percy. He stooped and bent one knee to the ground and drew the child gently to him. “ My son,” he said, putting the sword into the small hands and closing them upon it, “ give this to your mother and tell her that it was the sword of a brave and honorable man who died a gallant death on the battle-field.” The empty tray she was holding dropped from mother’s hand and a low cry escaped from her blanched lips. “ Tell her — ” but a tear splashed down upon the little upturned face. He

laid a hand caressingly upon the yellow curls and rose to his feet. He thrust a letter into the hands of one of the other children and without another word he hurried off down the walk ; the soldier followed, and a moment later they were galloping along the lane toward the river.

I think none of us really understood until little Percy went up to mother and began in his childish way to repeat what the officer had said. But when with one great sob she stooped and lifted him in her arms with father's sword hugged to his breast — oh, then, we all knew !

Father had been killed ten days before at the head of his men while leading a charge ; and he had been buried on the battle-field.

That night, long after even dear faithful Mammy, and Uncle Joshua, who seemed dazed by the blow, had gone to their cabin and all the house was still, except for an occasional moan from the couch where mother was lying, I heard a slight sound outside the door. I had been asleep, but had awokened and was vainly trying to picture father lying on the ground with his face upturned to the

sky and his arm thrown above his head, and a dull red stain on his breast and on the grass beside him, as I had seen the dead Yankee soldier-lad lying, down by the play-house that never-forgotten morning.

I crept softly out of bed for fear of disturbing mother, and went over to the door.

“Who’s there?” I asked in a loud whisper.

A voice so low and sweet that I could hardly believe it to be old Aunt Rose’s voice replied :

“It de Missy’s Prin-cess.”

I pushed open the door and looked out. It was old Aunt Rose. The moonlight flooded the long cold hall and streamed over her sitting in a high-backed chair close by the door. Her turbaned head was held stiffly erect. Her hands were laid palm-downward upon her knees; her elbows were pressed against her sides and her feet were drawn together.

“I’se watchin’ an’ waitin’,” she whispered, “caze yer knows, li’l Miss Ma’y, dat Missy might *wan’* sumpin’ in de night, an’ den, here me, *ready*.”

CHAPTER XII.

“ PO'-SOULS.”

IT was a long month since Lee had surrendered the remnant of his army to General Grant at Appomattox Court-House.

At first a kind of lonely stillness had settled over the country, as if everything had suddenly come to an end. Crowds of black-robed women, indeed, with white faces and tearless eyes, stole every morning into our little church down at the landing, to pray; and to ask each other in tremulous whispers if there was yet any news from the other side of the swift, swollen river where their fathers and husbands, and sons and brothers were. But when they had gone back, hopeless and helpless, to their vigils at home, the grass-grown neighborhood roads were utterly deserted, and the strange awesome quiet closed down again.

Presently, however, our soldiers began to trudge by, making their way homeward in every direction. Their old canteens and grimy haversacks were slung still over their shoulders; their ragged caps were pulled down in military fashion upon their sunburned foreheads; their grey jackets, tattered, camp-stained and mud-splashed, were buttoned with a certain trim air across their breasts; their step, weary and footsore though they were, had not lost a steady measured cadence that told of years of strict discipline and watchful service.

But the buoyancy and the spring had all died out of these battle-scarred, weather-beaten, way-worn figures; a stern sadness was on their meagre faces; a curious half-defiant, half-bewildered look shone in their hollow, restless eyes.

Every day, singly, or in groups of twos and threes, they came along our rose-bordered lane and turned in at our gate. Sometimes they stayed over night; one stopped for a four or five days wrestle with a fever which had seized upon his half-starved body as he came through the swamps;

another dropped exhausted in the gateway, and lingered on with us until he died, raving in his delirium to the last of a vine-hung cabin out on the banks of the Comal River, where “Mary and little Mary” were waiting for him. But, for the most part, it was only for a rest on the steps that they came, while Mammy, from such poor and scanty stores as remained to us, got them a bite to eat. For they were all hungry, poor fellows!

While they ate we gathered around and listened as they lived over again their life in camp and hospital and prison; and made again their hurried midnight marches; and heard again the sharp click of the Vidette’s rifle; and wheeled again into the thick of battle; or led again the desperate charge, where this comrade or that fell with a bullet in his brain; or dashed once more up the breast-works after their brave young color-bearer, who won a cheer from the blue-coats themselves as he leaped down and planted his colors in their very midst! And as they went over and over the terrible four-years story, with all its dangers and hardships, its hopes and fears, its bloodshed and its

splendor, the dark look would die out of their emaciated faces, their voices would ring, their eyes would flash and sparkle. For a brief space defeat and humiliation were forgotten, and the old familiar “rebel yell” would seem about to burst from their lips. Then the momentary light would fade, and a silence would come that nobody dared or cared to break.

But these were unfamiliar forms that came along the rose-bordered lane and turned in at our gate; strange faces that greeted us and went on their eager way toward a home-welcoming, somewhere.

We had no tidings as yet from our own boys.

Mother’s eyes grew sadder every day and her step more listless. Father Kenyon came, bringing with him Louis Walker, whose leg had been shattered by a shell the very day before the final surrender. But he had heard nothing for a long time of the handful that remained of the Selden Rifles.

He had, himself, a scar on his left cheek from a wound that he got the same day father was killed. For he was standing by father when he fell, and he helped, with the blood streaming from his own

face — and washing away his tears ! — to lay him in that hastily scooped-out grave on the battle-field, where he sleeps still.

"Ain't b'uther Tom an' b'uther Hart, an' Dandy an' Virg never comin' home no' more, Mammy ?" little Percy asked one day. "All the yether *webels* is comin' home an' goin' home all th' time !"

"Ya'as, honey, *cose* dey is !" Mammy replied with a quick glance toward mother who was walking slowly up and down the veranda and watching the gate ; "ob *cose* dey is on dey way dis minit. Yer ole Mammy knows dey is. On'y dey ain' gwine ter come *footin'* it, lak dese here po' hungry white trash whar yer sees comin' pas' dis yer way mawnin' an night. '*Dough* I is pow'ful glad ter gin 'em sumpin ter eat," she added hospitably, "jes ez long ez dey is er dus' er meal lef' in de barril. But we-all's white chillun ain' gwine ter come dat er way. We-all's folks *rides*!"

"An' me an' Unk Joshua, an' b'uther Tom an' b'uther Hart, an' Dandy, an' th' res' of us four little boys 'll hoe th' cane an' grin' th' sugar, an' buil' up th' fires, an' take care of mother, won't

we, Mammy ?” he asserted proudly another day, as we walked from the deserted Quarter over to the great-house.

Mammy groaned, as if this vision — since, a sturdy reality ! — were almost more than she could bear ; but Mandy said with a flirt of her shoulders :

“ Spec dem fool-niggers is wishin’ by dis time dat dey uz back in dey own cabin, wid Mammy ter gin out dey vittles eb’y mawnnin’ ; an’ Daddy ter mek ’em hump dey-sefs down de cane-rows twel sundown ! ”

The cabins were indeed empty and the negroes all gone ! Except, of course, Uncle Joshua and Mammy and Mandy. And mother’s *Prin-cess*, old Aunt Rose. To say nothing of the “*triplers*.”

The men of the field-gang had been slipping quietly away, one by one, during the past six months. By planting-time hardly an able-bodied hand, or a plantation-mule remained on the place. With the news of the surrender — and they seemed to have heard it even before we did — there was a general stampede from the Quarter. They

swarmed down to the landing to hail the downward-going boats and crowded aboard in breathless haste, generally taking a pile of bed-clothes and a battered-looking chest with them, and leaving the rest of their belongings carefully locked up in their deserted cabins.

For a time the house-people stayed on, going about their work in a fluttered, excited kind of way — at which in truth no one can wonder! and regarding rather contemptuously the hurried exodus of the field-hands.

But one fine morning M’lindy and Sophy and ’Riah had disappeared. A day or so afterward Aunt Hester came into the dining-room where we were at breakfast. She passed around the hot hoe-cakes she carried and then planted herself behind mother’s chair. “Mis’ Lucy,” she said, “I hates ter leab you an’ de chillun, ’deed I does. But yer knows, chile, dat I is free now, an’ I wants ter *feel* my freedom. ’Pears lak I cy’ant *feel* hit long’s I stays on de place, even wid de wages you is ’lowin fer ter gimme. An’ so I’se had my *chis’* tucken down ter de landin’ an’ I’se gwine ter de

city fer ter ‘joy myself’ erwhile an’ *feel* my freedom.”

“Umph,” grunted Mammy, after mother had taken leave of her and she was backing out at the door. “Dat Hester ain’t b’long ter we-all’s fambly but jes’ ‘bout thirty year no-how. Ole Mars’ done bought her fum er nigger-trader *den* I reckin’ !”

A little later came Aunt Ca’lline: “Mis’ Lucy, chile, I is made up my min’ ter leab yer; ‘dough hit do trebble me pow’ful ter go ‘way fum you an’ de chillun. I’se gwine ter de city termorer. I don’ know, ‘dough, how I is gwine ter git erlong; an’ mebbe I ain’ gwine ter *lak* hit down dar. Dat huccome I gwine ter leab de triplers heah, ‘long er you. Caze I mout come back ef I *don’t* git erlong.” And sure enough, Marthy and Mary and Laz’rus marched up to the house the next morning and announced that their mammy had “saunt ‘em fer ter stay wid Mis’ Lucy twell she fin’ out how she lak hit in New ‘Leens.”

Jerry and Jake and Grief were among the very last to go. “Yer knows, Mis’ Lucy,” they said as they stood around, looking a little shamefaced and

sheepish, “yer knows dat dey ain’t no use o’ we wu’kin’ *now* whence de Gov’mint is *bleege* ter tek cy’ar o’ we-all. De Gov’mint is ’vite us ter hol’ out we han’s; an’ we is boun’ ter see what is gwine ter be shuck down ter de po’ ’buseded nigger, yah! yah! yah!!”

Jerry had his banjo under his arm, and as they went off down the lane we heard him strumming on it, and their voices came back to us in a lively refrain :

“Sheep an’ shote walkin’ in de paster,
 ‘Sheep,’ said shote, ‘won’t yer walk er little faster?’
 ‘Shote,’ said sheep, ‘my toe is so’,’
 ‘Sheep,’ said shote, ‘I did’n know.’”

At last, one afternoon, we were all out on the veranda. Grandpa was there; and Mère, with old Justine behind her chair in her bright *tignou* and white apron, just the same as if there had been no war, and she had never heard of freedom. And mother in her low chair. And cousin Nellie in the hammock under the rose-vine softly singing :

“Wounded by bayonets, shells and balls,
 Somebody’s Darling was borne one day.”

The magnolias were in bloom, their great white bells showing among the dark-green leaves of the trees that bordered the long avenue down to the gate, and their peculiar pungent perfume coming up to us on little puffs of warm south wind. And there were roses starting the ruined hedges. But the flower-beds were choked with weeds; rank grasses waved knee-deep in the rose-garden; piles of last winter's dead leaves were drifted against the trellises; unpruned and untended vines trailed over the walks. Out in the fields the thin stand of cane whose sickly yellow tufts rustled in the breeze, was knotted with tie-vines; the cotton-patch had disappeared under a mass of morning glories. Over by the edge of the swamp, a blackened waste surrounded one tall, wide-mouthed chimney—the unknown hand that put the torch to River-View and to the out-houses of Bon-Soldat had the same night fired our sugar-house and sheds. A forlorn, ragged, unkempt look was over everything.

“Hit don’t look lak we-all’s plantation, do it, Mis’ Lucy!” sighed Mammy, who had come out

of the hall-door and stood by mother. To which mother shook her head silently.

Mandy, now a tall comely girl of seventeen, was sitting on the top step winding yarn. I was patiently holding the hank for her.

“Caze, yer knows, Miss Ma'y,” she said, “dat dem pizen, no-'count house-gals is done sot dey-se'fs free, an' we is got ter larn ter do de wu'k an' mek we-all's own livin'.”

“The “*triplers*” were playing out on the lawn. Old Aunt Rose sat on a bench, with her switch across her lap minding them — not that Marthy and Mary and Laz’rus needed minding; great, sturdy, strapping, ten-year-olds that they were! But Aunt Rose followed them about and looked after them from her long habit of “mindin’ de babies.”

Uncle Joshua was on the bottom step with the little boys grouped around him. Poor Uncle Joshua, his wool had turned white as cotton since the day the Yankee officer brought home father’s sword!

A small dark object lay in his wrinkled yellow

palm. The little boys were looking at it curiously.

“What is it anyhow, Uncle Joshua?” one of them asked.

“Hit am er rabbit-foot,” replied Uncle Joshua.

“Rabbit-foots is for good luck, ain’t they, Uncle Joshua?” said Percy.

“Ya’as, honey. An’ I is went ’roun’ dis mawnin’ ‘fore de time fer ter ring de plantation-bell — I is gwine ter keep on ringin’ dat bell eb’y mawnin’, Mis’ Lucy, same ez ef dem lazy niggers uz heah!” he interrupted himself to say, turning an upward look at mother who smiled wistfully down at him. “I is went roun’ an’ teched all de pos’es on de place wid de rabbit-foot. De cayage-gate pos’ an’ de house-gate pos’, an’ de v’randy-pos’, an’ bofe de do’-pos’es, er hopin’ dat de rabbit-foot ’ll fotch good-luck ter de place. Caze hit ’pears lak ez how good luck am ez sca’ce on dis plantation dese times, ez jay-birds on er Friday.” And Uncle Joshua gave a sort of groan.

“Is jay-birds scarce on Friday?” demanded Will.

“Look-er heah, honey, is you eber in yo’ bawn day heerd tell o’ anybody whar is see er jay-bird on er Friday ? ”

“But why, Uncle Joshua ? ”

“Go long, chillun ! yer knows dat de jay-bird am bleege ter spen’ he time er totin’ san’ er Friday.”

“But *why* ! ”

“Well, dey *do* say,” said Uncle Joshua, “dat hit am de rabbit dat done sot dat wicked jay-bird ter totin’ dat san’. Yer see hit am sump’n lak dis yer : De rabbit am de’ mos’ wises’ er all de anermiles ; an’ onct he gin er party, lak whar yo’ maw use ter gin fo’ de wah whence Marster an’ de young Marsters uz heah ; an’ dey wa’n’t nobody kill yit on de fiel’-er-battle ; and no swo’d wa’n’t saunt home ; ” Uncle Joshua’s voice faltered, but he presently went on :

“Well, Mars’ Rabbit he gin er party ; hit uz on er Friday, caze he al’uz gins he’s party on er Friday. An’ all de critters done come, an’ dey uz havin’ er *fine* time. Whoo ! er mighty fine time ! But jes’ ‘zactly whence dey all done eatin’ de

gombo, an’ de cat-fish uz gwine ter be brung in, Mars’ Jay-bird he tucken sick. An’ he rise up fum he cheer an’ say ez how he feel pow’ful bad fer ter leab all dat good comp’ny, but he got ter go home an’ sen’ fer de doctor; an’ den he go off, limpin’-lak. De res’ o’ de comp’ny dey uz turrible ’stressed. Not but whar dey could *eat* do’.” Uncle Joshua chuckled. “An’ dey stay ober dat possum an’ sweet-’tater plum twel de nex’ mawnin’ !

“Whence dey all git home, lo an’ behole, all dey house done been broke op’n an’ all dey ’sessions done stole! Dey all mek er mighty ter-do, an’ run ter Mars Rabbit (caze he so wise), de jay-bird ’long o’ de res’. Mars’ Rabbit he thunk er minit an’ den he tell ’em ter go back ter dey own house caze he ain’t got no notion ’tall ’bout who dun tuk dey-all’s prop’ty. An’ Mars’ Jay-bird he mo’n de loudes’ er all an’ ’buse Mars’ Rabbit on de way home caze he didn’t gin ’em no ’vice ’bout ketchin’ de thief.”

“If Mars’ Rabbit was the most wisest, why didn’t he know who the thief was?” inquired one of the small listeners.

“Dat 'zactly whar I gwine ter tell yer! On de ve'y nex' Friday Mars' Rabbit he gin 'nuther party an' ax em all, an' dey all come jes' de same ez befo'. An' zactly de same ez de yether time Mars' Jay-bird riz up in he cheer an' 'clar dat he tucken sick an' dat he mus' go home an' sen' fer de doctor. An' off he go limpin'-lak. Den Mars' Rabbit he ax de compn'y fer ter 'scuse him fer er li'l while. An' soon's he out'n de house heah he go todes de Jay-bird house, *bookity! bookity! bookity!* whoo! he do git ober de groun' fas! When he git dar he op'n de do' an' goes in caze dey want nobody dar; an' so he shet de do' an' sot down by de fiah an' waited. Pres'ny he hear er noise comin', an' 'rectly de do' op'n, an' in come Mars' Jay-bird, pow'ful spry, an' totin' er big baig on he shoulder. An' yer jes ought ter see whar wuz in dat meal-sack!”

“An' Mars' Jay-bird was'n sick at all!” cried Percy amazed.

“Cose he wa'n't, but whoo! he mighty sick when he see Mars' Rabbit sittin' dar in de cornder jes' er waitin' fer him! He drap down on he knees an'

he beg, ‘Please, Mars’ Rabbit, don’t put me in de jail !’ Mars’ Rabbit he thunk and thunk, an’ ’rectly he gin out he min’ ’bout de case. He say, ‘Mars’ Jay-bird, I don’t lak ter ’stroy yo’ char-acter wid yo’ neighbors an’ I gwine ter let you off *on de perwided*, dat you don’t nebber steal nothin’ no mo’. At de same time I is gwine ter gin yer sump’n ter do whar’ll keep yer busy on de feas’ days ; an’ also keep yer fum bein’ tuk sick an’ habin’ ter sen’ fer de doctor.’ An’ so’s he done sot de jay-bird ter totin’ san’ eber Friday, an’ dat de reason whar you cy’ant neber catch er sight o’ er jay-bird on er Friday. Dey all totin’ san’, dass why. Lan’ ! chillun’, I tells you dat Mars’ Rabbit am de mos’ wises’ o’ all de anermiles an’ he am al’uz sho’ ter fotch good luck. Das de reason I is tech de pos’es on dis place wid dis yer Mars’-Rabbit-foot !”

And Uncle Joshua’s eyes twinkled almost as they used to do, as he put the rabbit-foot back into his pocket.

Grandpa had been looking absently down toward the lane while he listened, and now he turned to

mother. “Lucille,” he remarked, “here comes another squad of soldiers. It is almost sundown, and we must keep them over night if we can. What is in the oven, Mammy?”

The gate opened as he spoke and the squad came in. We could see the glitter of their buttons in the red rays of the evening sun. They paused a moment at the end of the long shelled walk, and then came on marching abreast with steady soldierly step. There were four of them. Presently we saw that they had stuck a red handkerchief, or a bit of rag, on the end of a stick and were carrying it like a flag. One of them drummed with his fists on an imaginary drum, and another pretended to play upon a fife. The tune that they were all whistling came plainly to us in a moment. It was “The Girl I Left Behind Me.”

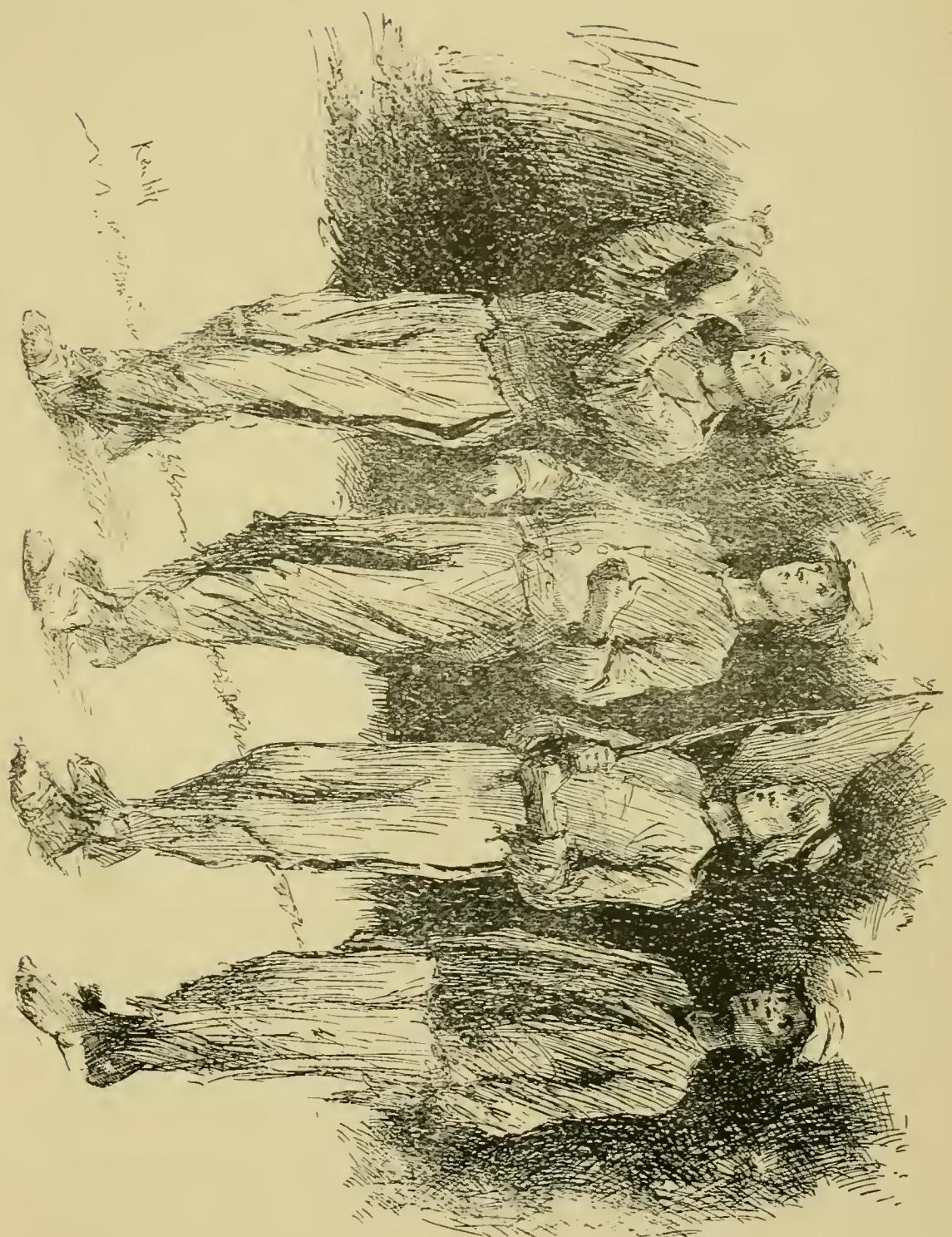
Grandpa brought his wooden leg down on the floor with a thump, and peered half-frowning over the railing.

But, what was the matter! There was mother springing from her chair and standing all a-tremble with outstretched arms. Mammy’s head was

lifted and her eyes shining. Then there was Mammy catching mother in her arms and running down the steps with her clasped to her breast as if she had been a baby. And then, there they all were in a group together, two of the ragged soldiers with their arms around mother. And Mammy first frantically hugging the other two and then turning, shouting wildly, to throw her arms around mother and the boys!

Uncle Joshua, after one look, threw himself upon his knees and cried out: “Lord, now let Dy servant ’part in peace, caze dese eyes is done seed Dy salvation!”

Yes! it was brother Hart, and brother Tom, and Virg and Dandy! Dominique Brion had hurried home to his widowed mother at Bon Soldat; Sidney Nagle and Tom Dennison had stopped with Father Kenyon down at the landing. They had tramped home together all the way from Virginia; and they had waited two days on the other side of the River for a chance to come over. And these, with poor maimed Louis Walker, were all of the Selden Rifles who ever came home!



We pressed around our boys at the foot of the steps. What scarecrows they were, to be sure! Their grey uniforms hung upon them in tatters; their pieces of shoes were tied with strings to their bruised and bleeding feet; their rimless caps were set jauntily upon long and unkempt locks. Their faces and hands were scratched and stained. Their laughing blue eyes looked out of deep hollows; their young cheeks were all fallen in. Virg, big, fat, solemn Virg, had become gaunt. Dandy, always slim and trim, was a tall framework of skin and bone.

“Jes’ look at dat fool-nigger, Dandy!” called Mandy from the veranda. She was leaning over the railing; her black face was wet with tears and her voice was husky, but a lively sparkle was in her dancing eyes. “Look at dat nigger whar is done been ter de war ‘long o’ Mars’ Tom! My lan’! I is sorrier dan ever fer Mars’ Tom!”

Dandy glanced up at her and laughed, showing his white teeth, and looking for a moment like the old Dandy. Then he threw himself upon his hands and essayed to lift his heels in the air and

clap them together. But it was a miserable failure. He tumbled over on the ground and laid there breathless. As he crawled up slowly, he scratched his head and looked around with a beseeching, apologetic air. “I reckin,” he admitted, “dat I is kinder weak. De truf is, Mis’ Lucy an’ li’l Miss Ma’y, we is all *hongry* an’ dat’s er fac’.”

Mother swallowed a little sob and she and Mammy looked at each other with a kind of agony in their tear-filled eyes. Then Mammy darted around the corner of the house to the kitchen and we all followed.

“ ‘Tain’t nothin’ but *po’-souls*,* chillun,” she said as she placed the young Marsters at the head of the long kitchen-table, with a cloth before them; and settled Virg and Dandy at the foot with some tin plates. “ ‘Tain’t de good-go-downs † whar yo’ Mammy done promis’ yer? But hit am all we got. An’ dem po’-souls am mighty good eatin’ when you is hongry. I is said ter yer Uncle Joshua dis mawnin’ whence I uz drappin’ dem po’-souls in de

* “Po’-souls” are corn-meal dumplings boiled with mustard or turnip-greens and bacon, or with collards.

† “Good-go-downs” are very light fried flour puffs.

pot-liquor fer Mis' Lucy an' de chillun an' we-all dinner, dat sposen de young Marsters an' Virg an' Dandy gwine ter git heah ter-day. An' dat huc-com'e I ter mek so many po'-souls ! ”

Uncle Joshua hovered around in an ecstasy of delight. “ De good luck done come back ter be sho’ ! ”

“ Joshua ! ” cried Mammy, turning upon him, “ don’t yer *dar* fer ter say dat de luck done come ‘long o’ dat dar no’-count rabbit-foot whar yer got in yer pocket, whence Mis’ Lucy am been er prayin’ an’ er prayin’, an’ de good Book say *pint-edly* as how de prars o’ de good ‘ooman am gwine ter be answered ! ”

“ I ain’t said hit ! I ain’t said hit ! ” replied Uncle Joshua, solemnly raising his eyes heaven-ward, “ Lord, hit am Dy han’ dat is brung dese chillun home an’ dat am stop de onrighteous wah twix br’ur an’ br’ur ! Dy name be praiseded ! ”

“ An’ did’n I tole yer, Mis’ Lucy, ” said Mammy, beaming at mother, “ did’n I tole yer, dat same day whar de chillun went off to de wah, dat dey uz comin’ home ! Did’n I *tole* yer dat wa’n’t nothin’ gwine ter happen ter dese chillun ! ”

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